

BANDWAGON

KING BURK & CO'S

MONSTER SHOWS

CONSOLIDATED WITH THE

GREAT AMERICAN MUSEUM

TRAINED ANIMAL EXPOSITION.

OUR MOTTO! ALWAYS & ONLY THE BEST.

September - October 1969



CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

BANDWAGON



Vol. 13, No. 5

September-October 1969

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Published bi-monthly by the Circus Historical Society, Inc. Publication, Advertising and Circulation office located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates: Full page \$35.00; Half page \$18.50; Quarter page \$10.00. Minimum ad \$8.00.

Annual subscription fees for the Bandwagon are \$6.00 and are due each May 1. Subscriptions received during the year will be charged the following: Those received in May-June, \$6.00; July-August \$5.00; September-October, \$4.00; November-December, \$3.00; January-February, \$2.00 and March-April, \$1.00. Single copies \$1.00. Some back issues available at \$1.00 each.

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

For this issue's cover we have reached back to the year 1886.

T. B. Burk was a well known showman of the second half of the 1880s. He was part owner of the King, Burk and Franklin Circus, which toured in 1884 and 1885, in 1886 the title was King Burk and Co.

In 1887 King and Franklin went their own way with a show and Burk formed his own show the T. K. Burk Circus that toured from 1887 to 1892.

This newspaper size herald used in 1886 is a four page and is printed in black on white paper. It was printed by the John B. Jeffery Printing & Engraving Co., of Chicago, Illinois. Pfening Collection.

SORRY ABOUT DELAY

Due to a European circus tour taken by the Editor, the July-August issue of the Bandwagon was late in being published and mailed.

We appreciate the understanding shown by most readers, and with this issue we are back on schedule. Thank you for standing by.

JOHN HERRIOTT TO RB

Johnny Herriott, CHS member, will present his animals on the Red Unit of Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus starting in January of 1970. The show has purchased the elephants, ponies and the mixed act from the Circus World Museum.

For the past seven years Herriott has been director of the circus performance at the Circus World Museum, and prior to that had been with Shell Bros., Cole Bros., Kelly-Miller and Mills Bros. circuses.

In addition to presenting his acts Herriott will be assistant to Bob Dover, R-B performance director.

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MORE ON BEATTY SERIALS

In the May-June issue of Bandwagon is a letter from a Captain J. King Ross, who clears up the mystery concerning Clyde Beatty's early film appearances. Capt. Ross seems to have established the existence of the serial "The Lost Jungle." But let me further add, that Clyde Beatty did appear in a serial entitled "Darkest Africa." According to Capt. Ross, the serial to which he is referring was made in 1934; "Darkest Africa" was produced in 1936. I further know that we are talking about two different serials. Capt. Ross says that "The Lost Jungle" was directed by Armand Schaefer and Dave Howard. Fine. "Darkest Africa" was directed by B. Reeves Eason and Joseph Kane, who also directed another serial entitled "Undersea Kingdom" (1936) for Republic Pictures. Republic later reissued "Darkest Africa" under the title "King of Jungleland." Furthermore, the cast that Capt. Ross lists is entirely different than the one in "Darkest Africa." The cast included, besides Beatty, Manuel King, Elaine Shepard, Lucien Prival, Naba, Ray Benard, Wheeler Oakman, Edward McWade, Edmund Cobb, Ray Turner, Donald Reed, Harrison Greene, Henry Sylvester, and Joseph Boyd. I could give more information on "Darkest Africa," such as the names of all fifteen chapter titles, but I think that I have established the fact

that "The Lost Jungle" and "Darkest Africa" are two different films. If anyone is interested in further information I suggest they get hold of a copy of "The Serials of Republic" by Alan G. Barbour, published by Screen Facts Press. I would recommend writing Entertainment Films Co., 850 Seventh Ave., New York, New York, 10019. They are the chief supplier of this booklet as well as other historical material concerning motion pictures. — William H. Schreiber

R-B Shows Profit for Six Months

The Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc., have issued a semi annual report to it's stockholders.

The report shows a gross income of \$9,173,401.00 and a net income of \$476,358.00, or .16 a share, covering the six months ending June 30, 1969. The similar period in 1968 showed a gross of \$6,884,648.00 and a net of \$460,313.00.

In his comments Irvin Feld, President, states that the startup costs of the Blue Unit kept it from contributing it to the income. He further advised that the corporation plans construction, ownership and franchising of motels and quick service restaurants with a circus motif, before the end of this year.

The report is in the form of a six page folder and is printed in four colors.

BACK ISSUES BANDWAGON MAGAZINE

1961	March-April Sept.-Oct.-Nov. December
1962	July-August November-December
1963	January-February March-April July-August November-December
1964	January-February March-April July-August September-October November-December
1965	January-February March-April May-June November-December
1966	All six issues.
1967	All six issues.
1968	To date.

The above issues are available but we have only a few of some. Refunds will be sent, when an issue is depleted. While they last \$1.00 each, we pay postage.

Bandwagon Magazine
2515 Dorset Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43221

CIRCUS FANS - CIRCUS AND VARIETY ARTISTS

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The ORGAN IS THE WORLD'S LEADING MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR CIRCUS AND VARIETY.

It is an indispensable tool of information for circus fans, artists, agents and directors — everywhere!

The ORGAN contains contributions in German, English, and French and is distributed world-wide. The magazine's address lists represent a "Who's Who" in the world of the circus and variety.

There are about 50 pages of news columns, stories and pictures in an average edition, and 100 pages of advertisements, many on multi-colored art paper.

The Yellow Pages of ORGAN offer the programs of all great international circuses and varieties from throughout the world.

PARKER AND WATTS CIRCUS

THE WONDER SHOW — OF — AMERICA

A HISTORY OF THE PARKER & WATTS CIRCUS

BY STUART THAYER

PART I — SEASON OF 1938

In October 1937 Charles H. Parker of Picher, Oklahoma and Ira M. Watts of Memphis signed a contract with Bud E. Anderson to purchase title and property of his 20 truck Seal Bros. Circus. They were to use this equipment to frame Parker & Watts Circus, one of the larger truck shows of the two seasons it operated, 1938 and 1939.

Neither Parker nor Watts had the money to purchase Seal Bros. Their financial backing came from George W. Potter of Joplin, Missouri, vice-president of the Eagle-Picher Mining and Smelting Company and the Eagle-Picher Lead Company. Potter was a friend of the two other men. His role in the venture is intriguing for he was not greatly interested in circuses. He visited the show only once or twice. He acted toward this investment as if it were any other. In a letter written in 1940 to a former employee of the show he said his original intention had only been to see his two friends realize their dream of owning a circus. Whatever his purpose, Potter invested a great deal of money in Parker & Watts and there is not one complaint on record from him.

The 1937 Seal Bros. bandwagon semi was repainted but did not carry the Parker & Watts title in 1938. William White Collection.

as to this continued drain on his pocket.

Charles Parker was an employee of Eagle-Picher, being with its Tri-States Mines division. He had circus experience with Kit Carson Wild West, Howes Great London, Famous Robinson and Patterson-Gollmar. But he had been with Eagle-Picher for some years by 1937. It appears that Parker had ideas for something other than a circus prior to acquiring Seal Bros. He was very impressed by the industrial exhibits at the Chicago World's Fair of 1934-35 and believed that a traveling industrial show would be profitable. He felt that both coasts were exposed to these things at the occasional fairs and exhibitions, but that the middle of the country was an untouched market. As will be seen these ideas stayed with Parker & Watts until mid-1939, though only a vestige of the original purpose was realized. For circus fans it's probably as well that these visions were not to materialize for the tented circus would have been something else in the hands of the people entrusted with the plan.

Parker at some time interested Watts in the idea, though whether or not it was before the traditional circus plan was accepted can't be determined. The two men apparently met on the Patterson-Gollmar show in 1917 and their friendship survived subsequent parting, Parker to the Mugivan and Bowers combine and Watts to World War I and Ringling-Barnum.

Ira M. Watts' first circus job was as

a ticket seller with Patterson-Gollmar and after war service joined Fred Buchanan in the same capacity with Yankee Robinson, World Bros. and Robbins Bros. In 1927 he went to Ringling-Barnum and in 1930 became manager of the Sparks Circus for John Ringling. When that show was taken off the road at the end of the 1931 season Watts went over to Hagenbeck-Wallace. He was a hard working man and gave Potter his best effort in operating Parker & Watts. He apparently had difficulty delegating authority, though this could mean his help wasn't of the best, and had a tendency to wear himself out on details that should have been handled by a subordinate. He was not adverse to doing any job that needed doing, but such a tendency soon wears a man out physically. An employee's letter cites the time he found Watts down on his knees in the road chalking directions because someone had not done their job.

He seemed to have a grasp of every aspect of circus business. His advice to the advance, to prospective employees, to the advertising people in New York still pursuing Parker's industrial idea are solid and to the point. He once wrote the winter quarters super-

The E. E. Coleman calliope semi and a cage are shown in the Emporia, Kansas, winter quarters during the building of the show early in 1938. Bill Woodcock Collection.



visor detailed instructions on the care of a pregnant lion.

Earl Chapin May, famed circus historian, thought enough of Watts to give him several pages of space in "The Circus from Rome to Ringling" and predicted success for such a hard working circus man.

To his credit, also must go the fact that he honored all his commitments when others might have chosen bankruptcy or "redlighting". He paid his employees first as long as there was money in the cash box. He would not tolerate grift of any kind, running a clean, honest show when he was offered alternatives several times. It appears to the writer that Mrs. Watts, who travelled with the show, had much to do with the philosophy under which it operated. She took a personal interest in the employees as well as designing and making costumes and helping to stage production numbers. One employee, jailed in Virginia for drunkenness for a third of a season, was the recipient of many letters from Leona Watts and stated later that she kept him from going insane.

The corporate entity that owned Parker & Watts was the Ozark Equipment Company of which Potter was president. Parker and Watts sold their contract with Bud Anderson to Ozark which took over the payments. This amounted to a \$5,000 down payment and \$1,000 per month beginning December 1, 1937 while the show was in quarters and increasing to \$2,000 per month once the road season began. Selling price of Seal Bros. was \$40,000.

In a contract drawn up April 15, 1938 Ozark leased to Parker and Watts, as individuals, the Seal Bros. property and whatever else had accumulated by that time. The terms of the lease were that Ozark Equipment was paid 1/3 of the gross admissions, 10% of the gross on concessions and 25% of the gross on advertising, all not to exceed the net profits. For their part Parker and Watts agreed to preserve and maintain the equipment and not to use their names in connection with a circus or other form of entertainment for 25 years. Once Potter was repaid his investment, plus interest, the stock of Ozark Equipment would be split three ways between Potter, Parker and Watts. The lease ran to December 1, 1938.

Winter quarters was established at Emporia, Kansas where the Seal Bros. equipment was stored and the search for acts and workmen began. Word that a show was being framed had preceded the purchase from Anderson. Watts received a letter from R. C. Schwartz of Mobile, Alabama in October, 1937 offering to sell eleven trucks, a light plant, blues, starbacks and a big top that had been used only six weeks. He



This horse van was highly flashed for the parade. The truck is shown in the Emporia quarters before the 1938 opening. Bill Woodcock Collection.

The steam calliope was redecorated with added carvings for the 1938 season. The semi was lost but instrument was saved and was remounted in a straight truck for 1939. Bill Woodcock Collection.

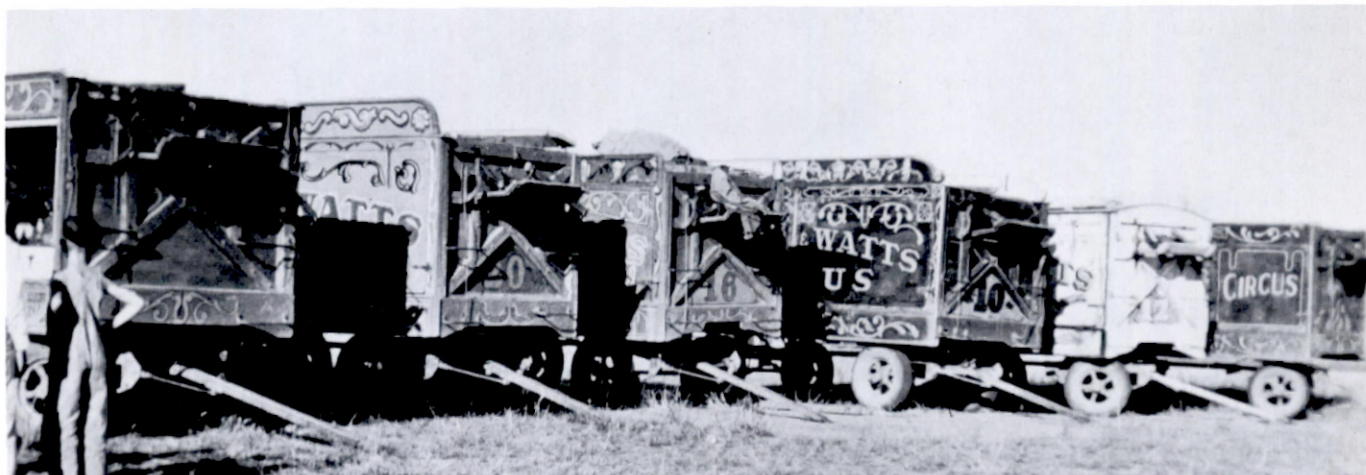


even offered to rent the winter quarters where the equipment was stored.

The plunder from Seal Bros. consisted of 16 semis, 4 panels, 9 cages and a buggy plus all the equipment that went in them, including the menagerie. Parker & Watts used 15 of the semis, adding 4 other pieces including the calliope semi. When Charles Brady finished rebuilding and assembling the show listed as follows:

There were three unnumbered semis, a canvas wagon, bosses sleeper and a 1928 Reo with a Kingham semi that carried the steam calliope. In 1934 the calliope had been on E. E. Coleman's Motorized Circus. It had supposedly been built for the Cincinnati showboat "Island Queen". Also, Watts leased from a man named Fielding Graham three 1½ ton trucks for \$40 per week. These were a 1933 Chev, 1934 Ford and a 1937 GMC.

P & W #	Cab	Semi	use	Seal Bros. #
3	1937 Chev	Spencer	office	3
15	1933 Chev	homemade	chairs	15
33	1937 Chev	Springfield	horses	97
34	1934 Chev	Springfield	air calliope	20
35	1936 Chev	Spencer	horses	18
37	1935 Chev	homemade	ponies	21
39	1937 Chev	Eli Bridge	elephants	19
40	1936 GMC	Spencer	elephants	2 (?)
44	1933 Chev	homemade	cookhouse	none
46	1936 GMC	homemade	poles	2 (?)
48	1937 Chev	homemade	band	48 (#1 bandwagon)
52	1936 GMC	Spencer	light plant	27
60	1934 Chev	Spencer	water wagon	6
66	1937 Chev	Springfield	seats	81 (#2 bandwagon)
69	1934 Ford	none	candy stand	14
70	1936 GMC	Spencer	seats	13
101	1934 Chev	none	seats	not on show



Another lease was arranged with W. C. Richards for a female elephant named Maxine and a truck to carry her for \$50 per week and a small elephant named Thelma for another \$25 per week. Watts was very careful to keep Richards informed of the health of these two beasts during the season. Richards worried about split ears and bullhook scars as both bulls were without blemishes of any kind. Thelma did a single act to make up for the fact that she was too small to work around the lot. George Grace was impressed with her act when he saw it in 1939.

Three other bulls had come with the Bud Anderson contract so the show started the season with a herd of five pachyderms. Other animals purchased from Anderson and carried in 1938 were a camel, a dromedary, 2 tigers, 2 leopards, 3 lions, 3 bears, a hyena, a deer, a wild hog, a mandrill, a baboon and five Rhesus monkeys. A puma and 2 Java monkeys did not go out in 1938, for some reason, but 2 capybaras bought elsewhere did. There were 17 horses, 5 mules and 14 ponies in the sale and Parker & Watts added 2 horses and 6 ponies. These were necessary since the show was going to parade.

This horse van carried the show's title on the back as well as both sides. Joe Fleming Photo.

The six four wheeled cages from the Seal Bros. Circus are shown on the McCook, Nebraska lot in August of 1938. Joe Fleming Photo.

While Watts applied himself to framing the circus Parker went to New York to line up participants for his industrial exhibits. He had decided to have two free admission tents, one automotive and one kitchen wares. Advertisers were invited to outfit trailers that would be sidewalled in such a way that the public could go through each in turn. A fancy lunch was arranged at the Commodore Hotel featuring a circus band and canvas walls and advertising agency personnel were invited. Out of this and the publication of a slick-paper herald titled "Troupier" which went through several weekly issues the only bite came from the Sinclair Refining Company. Once the exhibit idea was not sold the focus was on fancy parade floats, but this, too, failed. What had started as tented specialties and went through ornate floats ended as a 40 foot long rubber brontosaurus which was pulled on a trailer in the parade and exhibited on the midway during the performance. Only this air-filled creature was left of Parker's grandiose conception born at the Chicago World's Fair.

The contract with Sinclair called for a payment of \$8000 to the circus. This

was to be provided in gas and oil which the show charged at various Sinclair stations en route. The show kept Sinclair advised of the route and were in turn told which stations to patronize.

A new big top was ordered from Baker-Lakewood. It was a 90 with three 40's. The rest of the canvas was former Seal Bros. property. The menagerie was a 70 with three 30's, the side show a 50 with five 20's, the padroom 30 by 50 and the cookhouse 30 by 60.

Paper was ordered from Temple Lithographing in Chicago and Central Show Printing Company of Mason City, Iowa, both firms being owned by the same man. The initial order was for 5,000 complimentaries, 12,000 billposters ticket orders, 8,000 litho ticket orders, 200 one sheets, 300 half sheets, 50 title sheets, 100 WAIT sheets, 200 single column newspaper mats, 200 double column mats and 100 2 1/2" mats. The artwork was all new and, except for one rush order from Erie, all came from Central Show Print. The paper bill for 1938 amounted to \$9440 of which \$4058 was owed when the show went into winter quarters in October.

Upon entering into contracts with suppliers to the effect that Mr. Parker

This photo shows a titled sideboard of one of the six cages carried in 1938. Bill Woodcock Collection.



nancial information. It was apparently Potter's wish that his interest remain unknown so the two active partners could not divulge his existence. However, they repeatedly offered his name as a reference and he dutifully wrote suppliers to the effect that Mr. Parker and Mr. Watts were solvent. A. B. Hartman, circus editor of the Billboard, somehow guessed that the two seeming owners didn't have the means to frame a circus as he was insistent that Watts reveal who was the man with the money. Watts finally gave him the facts, receiving assurance from Hartman that it would remain confidential.

In February, 1938 Watts had hopes of signing Clyde Beatty. A friend on the Ringling-Barnum show wrote that Beatty's quarters in California were flooded and that it didn't look as if Cole Bros. were going out. If Watts corresponded with Beatty the record hasn't survived, but he referred to his efforts in other correspondence so it is logical to assume contact was made. As to Cole not going out in 1938, this has to be put down as showman's rumor of the wilder sort as 1938 looked so good in advance that Adkins and Terrell put out two shows.

The staff for 1938, as it appeared in Billboard, consisted of: Charles Parker and Ira Watts, owners and managers; George Duvall, general agent; Thomas Dawson, contract press agent; Claude Morris, superintendent of the advance; Fred Brad, adjuster; Pete Brevold, twenty-four hour man; Joe deRoselli, press agent back; Jack Fenton, banner man; Mrs. Epsy, time keeper; Lennie Buchanan, front door; Leo Grindlesfarger, tickets; Bert Rickman, equestrian director; A. Lee Hinckley, band leader; W. E. DeBarrie, side show; Charles Brady, props; Red Monroe, boss canvasman; Harry Bender, side show canvas; Charles Oliver, cookhouse; E. S. Kewberry, lights; Carl Bruse, ring stock; Jack Noakes and Joe Harness, baggage stock; Chief Wishek, cages; Blackie Bowman, elephants; Homer Cantor, candy stands; Willie Mitchell, master of transport and Jimmy Thomas, producing clown.

The shows attorneys were Wallace and Wallace of Miami, Oklahoma. Every week the firm sent to the show a list of attorneys to contact, if the need arose, in the various towns on the route card.

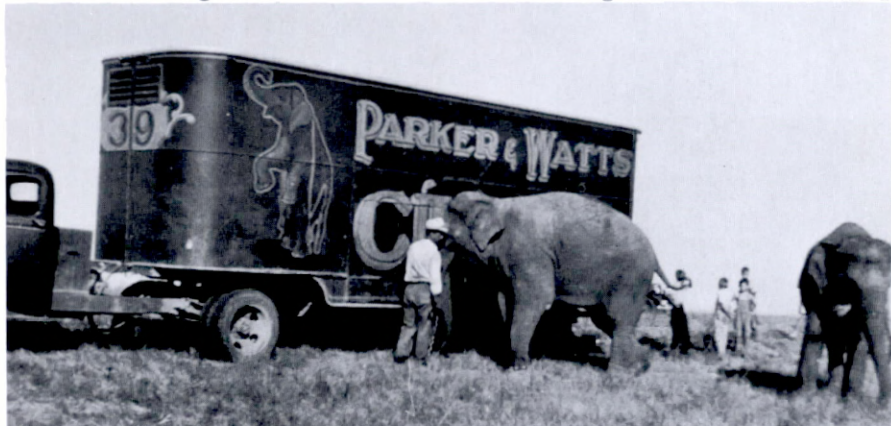
While the show was being framed Watts picked up a little money by parading in the Emporia area. He made \$366 before opening day and the show premiered on April 15 in Emporia with assets of \$47,983 against liabilities of \$47,500 of which the largest part was Bud Anderson's contract of sale. Winter quarters expenses were \$3347 from October to April of which the largest items (besides salaries) were \$626 for hay and \$198 for grain.

This newspaper ad used for the closing stand of the 1938 season, was rehashed from Seils-Sterling advertisement. Pfennig Collection.

April 15 and 16 rained in Emporia and the 17th was Sunday, so for the first three days on the road the average gross was just over \$300. The nut was better than \$500.

The program for 1938 opened with the spec entitled "Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp" and continued as follows:

Two of the show's elephants are pictured with an elephant semi on the 1938 show. Joe Fleming Photo.



Introduction of Kit Carson, Jr.—cow-boy star.

Pony drill (1); Mule acts (3)
 Revolving ladders (1, 2, 3)
 Elephant act—Thelma, the small bull.
 Clown marriage.
 Swinging ladders.
 Foot juggling, barrel jumping.
 Giant firecracker clown act.
 Brock Troupe — cloud swing (1, 2, 3)
 Football ponies.
 Albertini — foot slide from top of tent.
 Globe act (1, 2, 3)
 Concert announcement — wild west.
 Yamato Troupe — foot juggling and hair hang.
 Perch acts (1, 2, 33)
 Liberty horses — Carl Bruce, eight (1); Hazel King, twelve (2); Dell Graham, eight (3).
 Elephant head carry — James Conners.
 Second concert announcement—Tiger Tigerson and Kit Carson, Jr.
 Trampoline
 Menage horses
 Double traps (1, 2, 3)
 Cornell family — teeterboard.
 Rickoff riding turn.
 Violet Conners — iron jaw slide.
 Andy Carlino — chimpanzee trampoline act.
 Elephants — Jimmy Conners (2)
 Clown walkaround.
 Wirewalkers—Conner duo (1); Henry duo (2); Saint Marie (3)
 Brock Troupe — horizontal bars.
 The concert featured Whipping Smith, Australian whip cracker; Jack and Dell Johnson, trick riders; Chief Bender, archery; the Delmar sisters, trick roping and Tiger Tigerson, wrestling all comers.
 The side show offered Mark's South Sea Islanders; the Del Montes, impalement; Chief Yukon; torture act; Dolly Eddy in the swordbox; Karnan the magician; Princess Victoria and her snakes; Andy Carlino, the man ape, which also appeared in the big top; Madame Theo, mentalist; Madame deBarrie's Australian Bird Circus and Tuba Manago's minstrels. William de-

Barrie was the manager and Marion Wallick the inside lecturer.

The first week they visited Yates Center, Fort Scott, Chanute, Fredonia, Coffeyville and Howard, all in Kansas. Coffeyville was highest with \$737 gross, a figure not to be reached again until May 15. The temperature in Fredonia was 28. At Chanute on April 20 a woman stepped too close to the lion cage and was clawed. Fred Brad fixed it for the medical bill and \$350.

The second week began in Wichita with high winds and ended in Kinsley where the farmers hadn't recovered from the wheat crop failure of the year before. Three days saw the gross go over \$500 and Wichita contributed only \$277. It was decided to cut the nut to \$500, but what went is not ascertainable. One cutback was in heralds which had been going out at the rate of 1,000 a day. This was adjusted to 400, 600 or 800 depending on the town.

Another week in Kansas saw two profitable days, Hays and Stockton. The state American Legion convention was in Hays and the veterans combined their parade with the circus'. It rained four days of the week.

After Herington and a \$198 day on May 7 the advance was cut by \$20 to \$30 a day. This was the date that the Tim McCoy show folded in Washington, D.C. Joe B. Webb came on as fixer, having started the season with Art Mix, who went under April 6.

Junction City, Clay Center and Concordia did for Kansas and the show crossed into Nebraska at Superior on May 12. The last two days of the week brought good weather, for a change, and in Crete on the 15th gross reached \$1706 season's high to that time.

The new, low nut was reached every day of the fifth week. Lincoln, Nebraska came up with a \$1139 day. It rained some of every stand. Fremont and Columbus had to be heavily strawed. The town of Ord was missed on the 20th because of an impassable highway. This necessitated a long, 121 mile move to Broken Bow, too long a trip for the 1928 Reo and its motor blew up. It was traded for another truck in Grand Island but the delay caused the show to blow the parade at Broken Bow.

During the 1938 season only Robbins Bros. and Parker & Watts paraded of the dozen larger shows on the road. Whether they would have done worse without the parade cannot be said, of course, but the effort to parade every day must have taxed the personnel, especially on Parker & Watts, being a truck show.

The parade, as established before the season, passed in this order:

2 mounted girl flagbearers; #1 bandwagon, 6 horse hitch; Cage, 4 pony hitch; 4 mounted riders (2 men, 2 women); Cage, 2 horse hitch; #2 band

riding tab truck #66; Cage, 4 mule hitch; Cage, 2 horse hitch; Air calliope mounted in truck #34; Cage, 4 pony hitch; Clown cart; Pony cage, 4 pony hitch; 2 mounted women; Side show band on truck; Cage, 4 horse hitch; Elephant truck; Cage, 4 pony hitch; 2 mounted men; Clown band on truck; 6 mounted wild west performers; Sinclair dinosaur float; 5 elephants; steam calliope semi.

The cages were paraded open and all the baggage stock was put to work. The elephant truck was a semi painted with a large picture of a hippo, mouth traditionally agape. The cages were solidly built and well painted though they lacked aesthetic appeal. They were about seven feet high and mounted on rubber tires. The bandwagon was well painted, too, and doubled as an over-the-road trailer.

A warm day at Mullen, Nebraska brought \$1022 on May 22 and was followed by three days of rain. At Rapid City, South Dakota muddy roads cost the public a parade.



DATE	1938	TOWN	Season	MILES
Twenty-Seventh Week				
Oct. 10		Columbia, Tenn.		30
Oct. 11		Lewisburg, Tenn.		21
Oct. 12		Murfreesboro, Tenn.		48
Oct. 13		Tullahoma, Tenn.		42
Oct. 14		Winchester, Tenn.		16
Oct. 15		Fayetteville, Tenn.		32
Twenty-Eighth Week				
Oct. 17		Somerville, Tenn.		200
Oct. 18		Parkin, Ark.		81
Oct. 19		Searcy, Ark.		78
Oct. 20		Beebe, Ark.		17
Oct. 21		Dardanelle, Ark.		85
Oct. 22		Paris, Ark.		36
Close of Season				
Home Run to Ft. Smith, Ark.				40
Mileage To Date				10002

The season's greatest tragedy on the Parker & Watts show began on May 31 when Charles Parker collapsed on the lot at Mobridge, South Dakota. He was rushed to the local hospital, apparently the victim of a ruptured appendix. George Potter ordered private nurses around the clock for his friend and instructed the head nurse to wire him every day as to her patient's condition. The nurse reported to Joplin religiously and reported improvement every day through June 4. Then on June 6 Mrs. Parker wired Potter that her husband was worse. That night Watts advised Potter that Parker wasn't expected to live. Charles Parker died in Mobridge on June 8, 1938.

During the week of Parker's death the show continued through North Dakota, having entered the state on June 2 at Oakes. On May 31 Charles Sparks gave up and took his Downie Bros. show into quarters. (The show reopened August 15). At Fargo on the 6th the menagerie tent blew down during the evening performance without any injuries. As with most truck circuses Parker & Watts tore down and loaded after the evening performance and sat on the lot overnight, driving in the early morning to the next town. This is why the menagerie tent was up during the performance.

It had been Parker's habit to write Potter once a week reviewing business and general news. Watts took up this task after his partner's death, but soon became too busy and substituted an occasional night letter. For this reason there is not much information on the day to day activities after June 1.

On the 17th Parker & Watts entered Montana and were forced to give a "John Robinson" the next day at Miles City when the wind rose as the evening performance began. At Glendive on the 19th there was a \$700 gross despite competition from two baseball games and a bad train wreck within driving distance. The pole wagon was wrecked on the run into Glendive.

On Thursday, June 23 at Scobey Watts wired Potter, "Ringling closing Saturday Syracuse". As is well known Ringling-Barnum closed at Scranton that Saturday, but Watts information probably came via grape vine.

Every day from May 23 through June 28 the show made the nut indicating their route or their parade were bringing in the business. The first competition of the season appeared at Helena, Montana on June 30 where Barnes-Floto was one day ahead. Going into Salmon, Idaho for a July 5 stand the haul over the continental divide was so long and difficult that there was no parade, no menagerie and no matinee. In addition a camel was killed in a truck accident. The next day's run into Mackay was another long one and the new calliope truck was wrecked. Watts gave up on the calliope and shipped the salvage to Joplin.

On July 4 Seils-Sterling closed and returned to quarters. But Russell Bros. and Parker & Watts, of the large truck shows, battled on. Five days in Utah from July 9 to 14 brought good business and good weather prior to a so-so week in Colorado. At Grand Junction, a very good day at the ticket wagon, they were a week behind Polack Bros. and were day and dated by something called "Brunk's Comedy". On the 20th the cookhouse was on the road all day with mechanical trouble and on the 21st at Salida strong winds called for another "John Robinson."

The second week in Colorado was an

improvement over the first. The show left the state at Julesburg on the last day of July. Erie Litho shipped 24 days worth of paper to Pratt, Kansas on August 2. It was a rush order and the only paper bought from Erie that season. There is no explanation for the purchase in the records but it does show that the brigade was two weeks ahead of the circus.

The next day, August 3, Cole Bros. played their last stand of the season at Bloomington, Illinois and returned to the Rochester quarters. Watts wrote Potter a few days later, "The Cole show paid everyone off at the rate of \$2 each, performers and all, and didn't let them know they were going in until they arrived home." He also said Russell Bros. were wildecating.

Three weeks in Kansas brought slow business for Parker & Watts. On August 6 at Oberlin high winds caused the top to be emptied when only half the matinee had been presented. From the 19th through the 26th not one day reached the nut. Watts said business was at an absolute standstill. Yet he was still out and Cole and Ringling and Seils-Sterling and Downie Bros. were not. August 5 had seen Harris Bros. close. August 10 was the last day for Newton Bros.

Sometime in August, Watts wrote John Ringling North asking for the Barnes-Floto route so that he could avoid it. North, ever cautious, turned him down, saying, "we do not want to do anything deliberately, of course, to hurt you in any way, but your request is a most unusual one."

A spectacular fire in the business district of Kingman, Kansas on August 24 cut the show's take to \$294, the lowest since a 40 degree day back on May 7. The route led into Oklahoma the last week of August. The weather had been good since the 13th and was to continue so until the show closed. At Clinton, Oklahoma on September 1 Barnes-Floto-Ringling was two weeks behind and billing heavily. At Cushing on the 5th and Okmulgee on the 6th Russell Bros. were one week ahead. On September 2 Watts received a letter from Terrell Jacobs saying he'd be interested in joining the show for the 1939 season. Jacobs was with Barnes-Floto at the time.

The rest of the season was spent in Arkansas and Tennessee and business was average. Nine days out of forty it didn't reach the nut, though Mena and Magnolia, Arkansas and Columbia, Tennessee proved excellent stands. At De-Queen Arkansas on September 15 "Wally" the male lion died. At Stuttgart on the 28th Haag Bros. were one day ahead and at Marianna four days ahead. The show was the first circus to ever play West Memphis, Arkansas which was the September 30 stand.

The show closed at Paris, Arkansas



For the 1939 season the No. 1 bandwagon was beautifully repainted and paraded with a six horse hitch carrying the big show band. Pfening Collection.

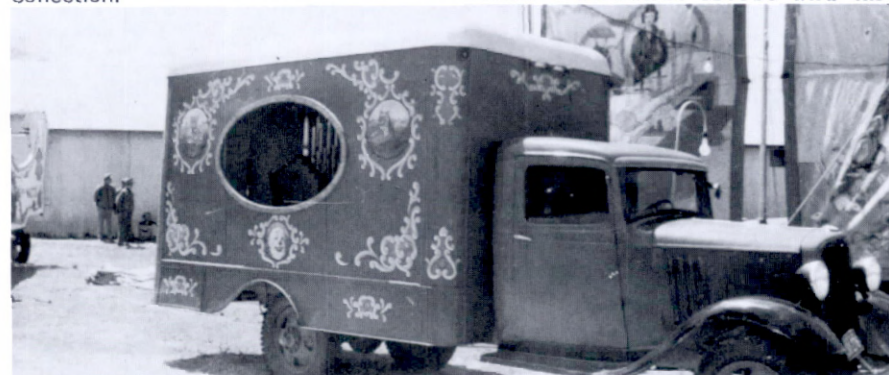
and proceeded to winter quarters at South Fort Smith. It had been out one hundred and ninety-one days in the worst circus season in the history of outdoor amusements. No one had missed a pay day, but there was no money in the till. Only George Potter's continued loans had kept the show alive. On seventeen dates the gross exceeded one thousand dollars. On fifty-two dates it didn't make the nut. The banner day was June 1 at Aberdeen, South Dakota. The show had traveled 10,002 miles. The question on this and every other show was, "Will it go out again next season?"

On October 14 Watts had written an advertising man in New York (still employed in pursuing Charles Parker's dream of industrial exhibits), "Parker & Watts Circus completes the season on October 22 and will winter at South Fort Smith, Arkansas. There is no doubt but what the show will go out again next year."

PART II — THE SEASON OF 1939

At some time prior to October, 1938

An air calliope was carried and paraded in this straight truck. The truck was parked at the back door and the calliope was removed and placed on the bandstand during the performances. Pfening Collection.



George W. Potter agreed to bankroll the 1939 version of the Parker & Watts Circus through the Ozark Equipment Company which owned the show. Just when he said this is not in the records, but it must go down as one of the most optimistic agreements ever made in circus financing. 1938 had been a disaster for every show on the road. Tim McCoy's Wild West had folded after one week on the road, Seils-Sterling gave up in July, Cole Bros. in August and, of course labor trouble had brought the big one, Ringling-Barnum, to its knees in June. Several smaller shows had folded, one after another like ten-pins. Russell Bros. had been forced to winter in Donna, Texas because there wasn't enough money to get the show home to Rolla, Missouri.

Parker & Watts had finished out the route, but ended in the red, owing several thousands of dollars to suppliers. Ira Watts spent most of November writing letters of explanation concerning the debts. Sinclair Refining Company, Central Show Print, Erie Litho and Baker-Lockwood were the main creditors. Small amounts were placed against each account during the winter.

Thirty people spent the off-season at the South Fort Smith quarters. Most of them received no salary, only meals, and they came and went as rumors of work ebbed and flowed. The animal men were fortunate; they drew \$5 a week and their helpers \$2 or \$3.

Watts tried to find a light plant sufficient to the size of the show. He had operated the previous season with a 15KW Fairbanks-Morse and three

½KW Kohlers. On December 7 US Printing and Engraving wrote offering for sale two semis from the Tom Mix show. Later in the month they offered the bull, "Queen" from the same circus for \$850. On December 13 Watts wrote Fred DeWolfe of Ringling-Barnum and Jess Murden of Cole Bros. asking to buy two medium sized bulls. Both replied that they had nothing themselves and knew of none available. In January the leases with Fielding Graham for his three trucks which had been on the show in 1938 and with W. C. Richards for his two bulls, Maxine and Thelma, were renewed. Graham also accepted a job as director of public relations with Parker & Watts. Some trucks of the defunct Chase and Son Circus were purchased.

Watts met Terrell Jacobs in Florida in February and they talked contract. Watts sent an agreement to Jacobs when he returned to quarters but nothing came of it. Charles Brady was busy building wagons and Bruce Lafarra began painting them in February. Lafarra painted the show both seasons and his work was very good. A special air-conditioned cage was constructed for Andy Carlino, the chimpanzee billed as the man-ape. He was getting bigger and stronger, the show claimed. The calliope was enconsed in a truck for 1939 instead of in a semi as before.



Semi No. 42 was added for the 1939 season and served as the No. 2 bandwagon, carrying the side show band. Pfening Collection.

L. B. Greenhaw came on as general agent for 1938. He had experience with M. L. Clark & Son, Rhoda Royal, Sells-Floto and other shows. He and Watts had a great deal of correspondence over the winter. Greenhaw lived in Lafayette, Indiana and he prospected that state and Ohio before spring. On December 10 he wrote Melvin Hildreth, President of the Circus Fans of America, asking that the 1939 convention of the CFA be held on Parker & Watts. It was, on July 8 in Ann Arbor, Michi-

gan and this writer, then a lad of thirteen, remembers it vividly. In March Greenhaw met Floyd King, general agent for the Cole show, and they agreed not to cover each other. King said he would stay out of Marietta, Cambridge and Zanesville, Ohio. What towns Parker & Watts agreed to avoid is not in the record. This amicable meeting contrasts sharply with the Greenhaw-King controversy in August, described below.

The plan was to show the midwest and southeastern parts of the country, 1938 having been spent out in Indian country. By doing this a show can use the same program two and possibly three years before having to change. Among the instructions Watts gave Greenhaw were to avoid Iowa, because of the four-wheel trailer law there (the cages were pulled behind trucks overland); to avoid West Virginia because of the number of low overpasses; and to avoid the towns around Chicago where Russell Bros. had shown in 1938. The reason for this last becomes clear when one reads the three things Watts said Parker & Watts couldn't do:

- 1) "follow in a town where the Cole show paraded as they had us beat there".
- 2) "go into towns where the Russell show got 10c and 20c as they

would expect us to charge a like amount".

- 3) "follow into a town where one of the big shows exhibited the year previous".

By March 16 it was certain that the Barnes-Floto aggregation was not going to leave Baldwin Park, California. Russell Bros. was rumored to be planning to move straight east from Donna, Texas as quickly as possible. Watts saw his major competition as being from Downie, Haag, Lewis and Barnett Bros.

In answer to A. B. Hartman's annual poll of show owners Watts replied, "In my opinion business outlook for early spring is not bright. This is based on

personal observation throughout the country and shows visited."

The call went out for April 18 at South Fort Smith, season to begin April 21 with a two day stand in Fort Smith.

Having barely survived 1938 all circus proprietors approached the new season with apprehension. Suppliers were very solicitous even though most shows had a balance owing from 1938. US Printing and Engraving was quoting paper at 5½ cents a sheet, 3½ cents for date sheets.

Under the terms of a new agreement between Ozark Equipment and Ira M. Watts, George Potter agreed to give Watts his 1/3 of the stock in Ozark upon payment of Potter's investment, just as had been the case between Potter, Parker and Watts in 1938. Potter also allowed Watts re-use of his own name (which he had surrendered for 25 years under the original lease) provided he did not use it in conjunction with the name Parker nor could he use the name Parker in any way. The percentages to be paid Ozark remained the same.

Very few of the 1938 staff survived into 1939. Watts, DeBarrie, Brady, Monroe, Morris and Oliver were the only holdovers. New members were Sam Marratta, front door; George Myers,



The light plant is shown parked near the marquee behind the side show bannerline. Pfening Collection.

equestrian director; L. Claude Myers, band leader; L. B. Greenhaw, general agent; Edward Johnson, contracting press agent; Jersey Schank, sideshow canvas; V. A. Rogers, lights; James Bowersock, ring stock; Jimmie Connors, elephants and menagerie; Joe Kennedy, candy stands. Joe B. Webb, who had come on late in 1938 as fixer, was still with it. Ceona Watts took over as auditor and John Alvah Jones was treasurer.

Equipment changes were minor. As mentioned, the steam calliope was

mounted in a new truck. The air caliope also was remounted, its new number being 55. Number 42 was a new canvas truck and the concessions were hauled in a new, unnumbered semi. The old candy stand truck was made into a stake and chain wagon. The Hamiter troupe and Joe Hodgini each carried their own horses in semi-trailers. The new light plant was numbered 105. The menagerie and the bull line were essentially the same as in 1938. The street parade was retained so the baggage stock varied only in individual animals.

derson, Indiana and reported that the strongest acts were the elephants, Andy Carlino, Stan Volera and Joe Hodgini. By comparison with 1938 it seems as if all the good acts were retained and strong additions made for 1939.

The season began in Fort Smith, a two day stand day and dated by the Hennie Bros. carnival. The weather was warm as the show headed north. The fourth day out (third stand) at Rodgers, Arkansas the gross was an unbelievable \$2,000. The joy was dampened by Claude Morris, with the advance, advis-

were billed in. Russell Bros. was also ahead. On May 4 they day and dated Sol's Liberty Carnival with Russell Bros. still ahead, but the citizens of Vincennes gave them a capacity crowd at night, despite it.

Skinny Dawson's wire of the first week in May said that Paul Lewis had threatened to sue Watts for covering his paper. "He has done this before so look out for this," Dawson said. "They have a rotten show and stick them up on passes. And leave plenty of heat."

At Anderson, Indiana on May 11



The no. 2 white ticket wagon semi is shown here. Pfening Collection.

The program for 1939 went as follows:

- Spec — Zanzibar
- 6 Pony drills — Asher (1) King (2) Kelso (3)
- Canines — Velma Zarrado (1) Hal Yeargen (3); Comedy trampoline — The Conners (2)
- Aerial ballet
- Two foot slides — the Albertines; Iron Jaw slides — Grace Orton, Ina Knight
- Comedy riding turn — Joe Hodgini
- Clown numbers
- Double traps — Fanning duo (1)
- Aerial Ortons (2) Aerial Zerrados (3)
- Juggling — Jerry Wisherd (1); Wagon wheel — Al Conners (2); head balance — Delbert Knight (3)
- Menage riders
- Comedy acrobats — Hackensmith & Mozingo (1) Voleras (2) Grahams (3)
- Clown ball game (excellent presentation)
- Liberty acts — 5 mules, James O'Conner (1) 6 horses, James Hamiter (2) 8 horses, Hazel King (3)
- Parker & Watts elephants — Jimmie Conners
- Clowns
- Single traps & aerial contortion — Anthony Mozingo (1) Vernon Liedtke (2) the Great Stubert (3)
- Andy Carlino, performing chimp, tight wire and trampoline
- Thelma, small performing elephant with Ena and Vera in background
- Web acts — Fanning, Zerrado and Sullivan
- Gaited horses
- Stan Volera flying act
- George P. Grace saw the show at An-

der, Indiana and reported that the strongest acts were the elephants, Andy Carlino, Stan Volera and Joe Hodgini. By comparison with 1938 it seems as if all the good acts were retained and strong additions made for 1939.

The show went into Missouri at Mt. Vernon on a hot day, April 25. The next day at Mountain Grove they lost the parade because of bad roads and truck trouble and ended the week with a good crowd at Marion, Illinois.

Skinny Dawson, advance press agent, wrote from Portland, Indiana on the 29th: "Cole show not putting up as much paper as usual, they are getting good publicity in the papers but we are getting just as much." Cole Bros. was billing the area in advance of their opening at Rochester May 1.

Most shows avoided southern Ohio in early 1939 because of the serious coal strike in that region. Watts and Greenhaw also decided to avoid the Barnett and Russell shows as both were apparently plastering opposition paper with "unfair to organized labor" stickers. The question of union activity raised its head over and over in 1939 — of course, it had closed Ringling-Barnum in 1938. The unions involved were those for billposters and musicians. Watts had sent the American Federation of Musicians \$50 before the show left quarters, but the records are not clear as to whether or not all the billposters were union members. Claude Morris carried a card for he threatened to tear it up at one point. The problem may have been whether or not the circus was paying scale.

The first week in May brought much opposition with it. In Centralia on the 2nd they day and dated one carnival, another was ahead and Rubin & Cherry

The drop frame ticket-office wagon semi is shown on the midway. Pfening Collection.

Watts received the following from the owner of Lewis Bros. "Your men are covering and stealing our paper and stands. We are forced to start suit here (Mt. Vernon, Ohio) to protect our property. We are very cooperative and decent to competitors but cannot afford this kind of opposition. We have photographed stands and taken affidavits in four towns."

Watts reply is not in the records, but two weeks later he remembered the threat. Business was very spotty the middle two weeks of May and on May 15 the agreement between Ozark Equipment and Watts was redrawn and instead of percentages of the gross the terms became a flat \$100 per week. Apparently the nut was too big, though there had been only two genuinely bad days at the ticket wagon. Whatever the reason, certainly no circus ever had a more generous backer than George W. Potter.

At Marion, Ohio on the 16th Watts wired Adkins and Terrell, who were in Lima, Ohio, "Our friends the Norths bannered us strong here for June 16. Understand they are doing same to you for 10th in Columbus and that they do not intend making Marion at all and intend making Columbus 16th."

The rest of the week went Wooster, New Philadelphia and Medina to a Sunday layover in Elyria. On the 19th Greenhaw was in Traverse City, Michigan, twenty-seven days ahead, and Watts wired him, "Understand Lewis whipping back and heading for Michigan. Caution all of advance against cov-



DO NOT BE DECEIVED!

The Only Real Circus Coming is

PARKER and WATTS CIRCUS

Parker and Watts carries no graft or gambling games.
Parker and Watts pays its employees in cash - not
promises

Parker and Watts Circus does not have to take bank-
ruptcy to avoid honest obligations to its employees
and other creditors.

Parker and Watts Circus presents its big free Street Parade daily.
We invite you to investigate any place we have shown. Fair,
honest dealings our policy. Why wait on a bankrupt circus?

Parker and Watts Circus will give its
STREET PARADE

and Two Full and Complete Exhibitions in

NEGAUNEE
FRI. JUNE 23

Parker & Watts carried on a heated battle with the Cole show in upper Michigan in June of 1939. This special "rat" sheet was used at a number of the opposition stands. Note the "why wait on a bankrupt circus". Pfening Collection.

ering his paper as his brother attorney in Michigan. Mix paid \$500 for doing so."

The fifth week began with excellent business at Elyria, Lorain and Sandusky. Barnett Bros. were ahead in the latter two towns and on the 20th Greenhaw advised Watts that Barnett had pulled all the Parker & Watts paper in Fostoria. "We must be hurting them," he opined.

Watts had borrowed some money from a personal friend and he was able to pay this back on May 24 and also make a payment to Baker-Lockwood. This indicates business was good. Friends wrote him that week that Cole Bros. was doing good business. On May 27 the billposters union covered Parker & Watts paper with "unfair" stickers at Huntington, Indiana, six days ahead.

The route went across northern Ohio, entering Indiana again at Decatur on June 1. Watts wrote to a friend that their banner business thus far had been behind Lewis Bros. and Barnett Bros. which showed that their "WAIT" paper was working. The advertising read: Wait for the show with the big, free

street parade. Positively coming to ———." Behind smaller, non-parading shows it gave the public pause. May 30 was the date of Watts first complaint to Greenhaw, this about the expense of the advance. It was to be followed by many more.

An interesting argument took place the first two weeks in June in which none of the participants spoke personally with one another, but in which the heat was noticeable. It was conducted entirely by telegram and L. B. Greenhaw began it by wiring Floyd King, general agent of the Cole show, at Montreal.

"The upper peninsula (of Michigan) will not stand two circuses. I have investigated all towns carefully. Too late for us to change. We must make it. We are in first and with our parade will get the business. We mean as much up here as your title. Our parade is as big as yours, in fact, better looking parade all the way through. Our billing and press as good as yours . . ." and so on. Greenhaw offered to stay out of Minnesota and go to Wisconsin. Actually, the show planned to circle the upper peninsula and come out again at the Straits of Mackinac.

Jess Adkins, then in Ithaca, New York, didn't appreciate Greenhaw's verbiage and he wired Watts, "If you sanction expressions coming from your agent you should expect opposition."

Watts answered, "Looks like an agent's argument . . . Greenhaw told to skip Minnesota hoping you'd give us a couple Michigan towns."

Adkins came back with, "As long as he is your agent you need expect nothing from us in the way of concessions."

Watts replied conciliatorily and told Adkins the route for the week of June 19. Greenhaw had already ordered handbills that were nothing short of rat sheets, but whether Watts knew of them or not can't be determined.

Greenhaw wired Watts, "Don't let Cole bluff you. King has not got a license in Sault Ste. Marie yet and Beekman carnival has Calumet sewed up week of July 2 so he is out there." Watts ordered Greenhaw not to contact King again.

The circus played the Indiana towns and moved into Michigan at Sturgis on June 5. D. H. Harter, an attorney in Peru, Indiana, wrote Watts offering him part of the Tim McCoy train. Business was excellent at Sturgis and Kalamazoo, good the rest of the way up the west coast of the state. A pony had to be destroyed at Manistee when its leg was broken on the way out.

On the 13th Greenhaw loosed his rat sheets in Marquette. They read: Do not be deceived. The only real circus coming is Parker & Watts. Parker & Watts carries no graft or gambling games. Parker & Watts pays its employees in cash — not promises. Parker & Watts

does not have to take bankruptcy to avoid honest obligations.

This was a bit close to the bone (Cole Bros. original owning company had gone through bankruptcy the year before) and Jess Adkins fired off more wires to Watts. Watts advised Greenhaw not to mention Cole Bros. in any of their advertising.

The crossing into Michigan's upper peninsula on June 17 was accomplished on three car ferries at 2 a.m., 5 a.m., and 6 a.m. The operation was so well handled that Watts wrote the State Highway Commissioner commending the ferry crews. The route went north to Sault Sainte Marie on the 19th. Cole Bros. had played the Canadian Soo (across the St. Mary's River) on the 11th. At Newberry on the 20th Cole Bros. was eight days ahead. Claude Morris, leading the brigade, swept back and forth across the peninsula checking his paper. He advised Watts on the 20th to have men posted along the parade route in Marquette in case the Cole show tried to poster the parade.

The Cole Bros. Circus countered with their own special herald. This is the "don't be humbugged" sheet circulated by Cole in the Upper Peninsula in the summer of 1939. Pfening Collection.

A FEW CIRCUS FACTS! Was Barnum Right?

Does the American Public Want To Be Humbugged?

For the past 8 or 10 years the Upper Peninsula of Michigan has been infested with a plague of synthetic "trucker" shows. Indeed there are about 40 of these so-called "circuses" running about the country, traveling via auto, trucks, house trailers, bicycles, wheelbarrows and roller skates.

If you have two trucks you can label them "circus" and start out. A great majority of these trucks circuses have little or nothing of merit to exhibit. Notwithstanding the Government charges no tax on amusement tickets, except those selling for more than 40 cents. Yet some of these "trucks" have the unmitigated effrontery to collect as much tax on these "tickets" or passes they dish out and give away so liberally as charged for the regular price of admission.

The circus business is a peculiar business. It takes years of experience and the services of men who have devoted the greater part of their lives, to successfully operate. In a few days this city is to be visited by a "trucker".

The big feature is the cheap price. The old man told us when we were kids to be wary of things that cost little or nothing; and to take mighty little of it. This particular "trucker" we refer to, first saw the light of day in 1938.

The organizer and manager operated a hot dog and hamburger stand on a highway adjacent to Memphis, Tenn., until he got tired of dishing up hot dogs, and decided to enter the circus business as an owner.

Now don't get us wrong. Everybody is entitled to make a living. But there is a place for these small truck circuses. We believe they should confine their endeavors to the smaller villages and townships and not try to fool the public with such false and malicious advertising as —

"World's greatest zoo" when they only have several cages. Biggest this and biggest that when any intelligent person knows that it would be impossible to transport such a show via the rubber tire route.

Don't be deceived. We don't tell you how to spend your money. See and judge for yourself.

The Great Cole Bros. Circus traveling on two special Railroad trains is coming to your city shortly.

It was organized 57 years ago and has paid many visits to Michigan.

It has exhibited in every state and is now playing the larger cities in Canada.

In the past 5 years the Cole Bros. Circus has made two trans-continental trips — from coast to coast. It has exhibited in every large city on the North American continent — from Portland, Maine to San Diego, Calif. — from Seattle, Wash., to Miami, Fla., with New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and all the other larger cities included.

One of the owners of the Cole Bros. Circus, managed the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus for 12 years while his partner managed and was part owner of the Sells-Floto Circus for two decades.

Tried and experienced showmen they know that the first requisite of operating a successful circus is to give the public a real entertainment with great stars and features assembled from all parts of the world. Not to see how little but how much they can give.

SAFETY FIRST!
Auspices ELKS LODGE

**IRON MOUNTAIN
SUNDAY JULY 16**





Also on the 20th Watts wrote A. B. Hartman of the Billboard, who had apparently asked about the contention between the two shows. Watts stated that he had instructed his men not to cover any Cole paper and to fight fair, which they did. (He conveniently overlooked the handbills in Marquette). "Then I got word from the advance that the Cole show was getting out one sheets and cards reading: Warning — Parker & Watts Circus unfair to organized labor. Employing non-union help. Signed: International Alliance of Billposters, American Federation of Musicians. They also got out a ridiculous "Warning" one sheet that they are the only railroad show coming to this section of the state and that all other circuses coming travel by autos, trucks, wheelbarrows and roller skates." He concluded by saying business at the Soo was the best they'd had in two years out.

Parker & Watts played Munising on June 21 and Marquette on the 22nd. Here they were nine days behind Cole Bros. At Negaunee on the 23rd they found heavy Cole billing. On this day in Escanaba, Gladstone and Iron Mountain their paper was covered with "unfair" stickers. Watts felt they were responsible for bad business in Iron

For the 1939 season three more small four wheeled cages were added to the parade. The cages were numbered 10, 12, 16, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30. The cages are shown here in the numerical order left to right. Pfening Collection.

Mountain, a railroad town. The matinee was lost in Iron River because of truck trouble on a long run. They were twelve days behind Cole at Iron Mountain and fifteen days back at Escanaba. Cole had gone into Wisconsin on June 18, headed for Minnesota.

All the words between the two shows left no lasting memories as both Watts and Greenhaw went out with Cole in 1941. As in most businesses fierce competition does not mitigate against one's acceptance of a rival's competence. As a last fling of the rhubarb as the two shows parted company in Michigan someone at Central Show Print advised Watts that Cole had asked them for Parker & Watts' route. The writer said he thought it was as "cursty" a piece of business as he had ever come across.

An interesting exchange occurred as the show approached Iron Mountain. The editor of the local newspaper let loose an editorial blast at all circuses and carnivals, saying they were a waste of time, did the community no good, and

why did the city fathers permit them to show there. Watts wrote a calm reply to the man, protesting his attitude and pointing out the money that traveling shows spent, etc. He also objected to the editor's tarring all shows with the same brush.

Before L. B. Greenhaw had cleared the upper peninsula Watts was berating him again for spending too much. He told him to keep lot prices in line with the show and the times.

Once again in lower Michigan the show played Cheboygan, Alpena, Bay City and Port Huron. At the last mentioned Barnett Bros. was ahead and stayed that way for four straight stands. The weather had become very hot. At Ann Arbor on July 8 the CFA convention was met and the show did excellent business. The fans rode in the parade and the cookhouse set up a special meal for them at 11 a.m. Irving K. Pond, well known theorist of circus acrobatics, was a graduate of the University in Ann Arbor and designer of its Student Union building. The local paper made a fuss over him and helped the circus publicity. Ringling-Barnum was billing the area heavily for their Jackson engagement. Barnett Bros. had shown in Ann Arbor July 1.

At Monroe on the 10th Ringling-



Barnum's Detroit billing was heavy and both Lewis and Barnett were ahead. There was a good house at both shows despite the opposition. The next day the show got publicity in newspapers all over the midwest when they missed Adrian, Michigan and wildcatted Perrysbury, Ohio. Apparently, the cook-house driver led the whole show astray. Adrian hadn't seen a circus in years and the newspaper said people were very disappointed.

After the business of the "unfair" stickers Watts kept a firm hand on his route cards, hoping to thwart any union attempts to make trouble. This was greeted by the press and some fans with repeated requests, most of which he ignored. There is very little news of the show in Billboard, for instance, after the show left Michigan.

The wheat harvest was in full swing when Parker & Watts hit Bowling Green and Kenton and attendance suffered. At Hillsboro on the 18th a long run and a muddy lot caused the matinee to be cancelled. They dipped into West Virginia for four stands beginning July 21 and back to Ohio at Lancaster on the 26th.

Downie Bros. and Russell Bros. spent July fighting each other in the east. Parker & Watts was now moving toward them and a three-way billing war was shaping up for Virginia. Floyd King's "Hit Parade", a tented musical show folded in the East in July.

Watts as now almost continually harping at Greenhaw about his inability to pick towns, spending too much money and generally acting like he was running the advance for a rail show. A typical wire went, "You let fans and friends bull and steer you. You have not investigated personally. You told me Marietta no good still we got 8 in rain."

On August 1 there was a fight between the bill crews of Parker & Watts and Downie Bros. Watts wired William Moore, owner of the Downie show, com-

The 1939 midway with bannerline and marquee are shown in this photo from the Bill Woodcock Collection.

plaining and asking for fair billing tactics. Moore came back with the statement that Watt's men had mutilated and pulled lithos and tacked banner on Downie-contracted locations. Watts then reiterated that he wanted a clean fight and had advised Greenhaw of same and pointed out that Downie had covered some paper, too.

In another wire to Greenhaw Watts said, "Let's cut out this unnecessary misrepresentation in heralds. Cut all references to zebus, llamas, buffalo, seals, also numbered chairs and downtown ticket sales. We want to build on semblance of actualities not gross misrepresentation."

The first week in August saw Denison, Cadiz, Barensville and Marietta, Ohio and Fairmount and Morgantown, West Virginia. Business was good all week yet Watts had decided by then to take out a winter show for he asked Hatch Show Print for a paper quote. He must have decided that the only way he could make ends meet for the season would be to cut the nut to a minimum and show the crossroads and swamps.

On August 4 Watts told James Beach to come on, indicating that he had decided that Greenhaw wasn't going to change his ways. Beach was at liberty, having been general agent for the just closed "Hit Parade".

In answer to a letter from W. G. Brown of Lamar, Colorado Watts offered the 32 whistle calliope and its GMC truck for \$1750. The reason he gave for selling was that they were not parading the unit.

The show entered Virginia August 8 arriving late in Winchester and giving a 4 p.m. matinee. The weather was hot for the next two weeks as they moved south against the Downie and Russell shows. For the first time that season Watts had to ask George Potter to ad-

vance some money from Ozark Equipment, indicating that the profit on the good midwest business was gone.

On August 14 at Norfolk Downie Bros. were a week ahead. Watts wired the printers to confirm all Greenhaw's paper orders with him, personally. On the 15th he sent Beach after Greenhaw with a letter relieving the general agent. Watts had expected Greenhaw to badmouth him to Beach, but Beach wired that Greenhaw had philosophized that he was just not able to adjust to a small show advance and that he bore Watts no malice. Later Watts and Greenhaw carried on a correspondence over what each thought the other's mistakes had been, but none of it was written in an unpleasant vein.

On the 19th at Petersburg, Virginia a truck was totally wrecked. Russell Bros. were ahead at Burlington, North Carolina on the 22nd and at Danville, Virginia on the 23rd. The Bill Roy carnival had also been through the territory. To present an example of how close together the truck shows were running we can look at Statesville, North Carolina which saw Russell Bros. on the 15th and Parker & Watts on the 24th, Hickory which had Downie Bros. on the 15th and Parker & Watts on the 25th and Asheville where Russell showed on the 16th, Downie on the 18th and Parker & Watts on the 28th. Only the paper houses could prosper under such conditions.

The circus crossed into Tennessee August 29 at Newport and headed west. There was opposition from a Negro fair at Murfreesboro on September 1 and from a Walking Horse fair at Shelbyville on the 2nd. The war in Europe began September 1, 1939 and Watts later said, "the bottom dropped out" of business at the news.

Joe Kennedy, the concessions manager, died on the lot at Clarksville September 6. The show reached Arkansas September 11. At North Little Rock on the 14th another truck was wrecked,

necessitating purchase of a replacement. The rest of the season was spent in Oklahoma, through three weeks of hot weather and poor business. Watts informed Potter, "Business very spotted, one day we are ready to close and then we get a break and do some business, but as a whole show is not making anything. I figure on getting away at either Florence or Charleston and going to Fort Smith and opening the small show on Monday, October 13."

Paydays were missed for the first time in the history of the show, perhaps selectively, as on October 4 Joe Riggers and several of the musicians in the kid show attached the circus for back salary of \$384. The stand was Guthrie, Oklahoma and there Parker & Watts Circus came to an end as an exhibiting entity.

Ozark Equipment Company took over the show and George Potter's secretary advised Watts to stencil the corporation name on all the equipment. The attachment was satisfied by leaving three trucks in Guthrie, the light plant, the big top canvas wagon and the calliope. The rest returned to winter quarters at South Fort Smith.

A new rental agreement was drawn up between Ozark Equipment and Leona Watts and this was the basis for the winter show, The Adam-Floto Trained Animal Show.

Watts went out with Adams-Floto (the only photograph I have seen of this show indicates the name was Adams-Floto, but the day book lists it as Adam-Floto. No paper has survived to my knowledge) from October 16 to December 23. This was a cut down show with some of the people from Parker & Watts and, of course, using some of its equipment. Ten trucks were enough to carry it. Hazel King did menage and a liberty act, Jimmie Conners had the bulls, one of the Fannings did all the acrobatics. There was no band. George Myers played the air calliope and was announcer and equestrian director. The clowns were Jimmie Thomas, Red Harris and a guy named Dutch. James Beach, Doc Heffernan and Joe B. Webb were the staff. Bill DeBarrie had a four-act sideshow consisting of a fire eater, a bird circus, a headless wonder and some magic. The menagerie held three bulls, three cages (deer and hog; dogs, capybaras and kinkajou; monkeys) five horses and seven mules. One truck and three men were five days in advance. The nut was \$125 and Watts left South Fort Smith with \$27 in the till.

The first week there was a rodeo, a fair and a carnival ahead, yet the show made the nut five out of seven days. But the size of the towns mitigated against continued success since the slightest opposition used up the citizen's time and dimes. Adam-Floto had a 25c and 15c admission with 10c children's matinees, but the day book is



The lone commercial exhibit with the show was the Sinclair Oil Company dinosaur balloon float pulled by an Austin truck. Burt Wilson Photo.

filled with such notes of opposition as FFA initiations, movie bank nights and school shows. In addition, there were eleven circuses and three or four carnivals in the state. None of the help was being paid and by December 5 James Beach couldn't take it and left. Watts took over the contracting, but by December 18 he realized the show couldn't do it and they wildcatted back to winter quarters. Oddly enough, the last stand, Cloutierville, Arkansas was a two-day stand. For the two days the gross was \$64. Watts had tried to fly in the face of the old axiom that a winter show can't survive without grift. Whether his failure proved the rule or not is impossible to say.

Upon returning to quarters Watts went ahead with plans to take out Parker & Watts in 1940. Erie Litho advised him they had \$5,000 worth of his paper on their shelves. In January the canvas was being readied and James Beach and Claude Morris had agreed to go out again. Over twenty people were working in quarters. Then, on January 26 Bill Hamilton of Reseda City, California asked if the equipment was for sale and Watts replied that it was. He



The Parker & Watts title was blocked out and the Adams Floto titled painted in for the short fall tour following the closing of the regular 1939 season. This photo was taken in the South Ft. Smith, Ark., quarters in February of 1940 by Burt Wilson.

sent a list and quoted a price of \$45,000.

George Potter was apparently not interested in investing any more money in the show. By March 8 Watts had definitely given up hope of getting another backer. On the 22nd Jess Adkins offered to buy the menagerie. "We lost practically our entire menagerie in the fire," he said, "in fact everything we had with the exception of the elephants . . . we are framing our show . . . on the same expense basis as during 1939 . . . The Southern country doesn't look at all good for this fall, and the fall territory it seems will be very limited. Canada, on account of the war, is out, so all in all the picture is not a very rosy one."

Richards bulls were leased, Maxine going to Mills Bros. on April 10 and little Thelma to Beers & Barnes on April 24. D. H. Harter of Peru wrote that he wanted to put out a 20 truck Gentry Bros. show using that title. He wanted to lease the Parker & Watts equipment, but Potter demurred. Harter had been sued by Mrs. Jess Adkins for mishandling her husband's estate and that may have warned Potter away.

Watts spent the summer of 1940 playing picnics and merchant shows in Arkansas with three trucks. In April, 1941 he provided some acts for the George Hamid St. Louis Police Circus. Zack Terrell hired him as assistant manager on the Cole show for that 1941 season.

The Parker & Watts equipment sat at South Fort Smith until April, 1942 when the menagerie, cages and beasts, was sold to Dittman Mitchell of Fayetteville. The four show-owned bulls went to Hamid Morton. The trucks were then moved to Joplin and eventually disposed of by George Potter. The records of the show went to Joplin, too, and then to the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection at the University of Missouri where the information on these pages was gathered. Parker & Watts Circus, the show with the big, free street parade, had disappeared forever. Earl Chapin May quotes Ira Watts as saying, "You can't get the money unless you get (the canvas) up." Watts got it up by dint of hard work and careful management, but the dollars weren't thick enough around the ticket wagon and he had to fold it up again.

BIOGRAPHIES OF SOME OF THE EARLY SINGING CLOWNS

By Dr. Robert J. Loeffler



The writer has attempted over the years to gather information on the lives of some of the more important singing clowns. However, this has not been an easy task. In fact, it has proven to be rather fruitless. Every conceivable reference source has been searched out but the amount of reliable information remains small. One great difficulty is the fact that many of the early clowns died at a very early age and any biographical data that may have been included in the song books of the day are no longer available to us. Furthermore, reference sources such as the *New York Clipper* and the *Billboard* were not in existence in the early 1800's. Nevertheless, the available data I have been able to find is included in the biographies that follow in a series of articles on singing clowns. It is hoped that after the publication of this information persons possessing material on any of the clowns or others not treated by the writer will be moved to furnish me with additional data. The first clown to be discussed is William Ethelbert Burke.

William Ethelbert Burke was born at Waterford, Knox County, Ohio, October 23, 1845. Burke had only the advantage of a country school education but even at an early age he showed exuberant wit and mimicry to the delight of the pupils and the frustration of his teachers. His early childhood was uneventful except for the fact that he was a source of laughter and joy to his young friends.

Burke's father arranged for his mirthful son to become the apprentice of druggist, S. S. Tuttle of Frederickton, Ohio. In such a position it did not take him long to win many friends by his magnetic personality and affability. He was the center of attention when it came to story-telling and the relating of jokes. And on many a wintery evening, the young lad had all his listeners holding their sides in uproaring laughter at his witticisms.

While clerking in the drugstore, the occasion arose for him to help take some cattle and sheep to Pittsburgh for the local cattle dealer. Apparently, young William decided the life of the big city was for him and after rendering his service to the cattle dealer, he set out early one morning to seek employment in the city of steel. Billy relates the story as follows:

[I] entered a large dry goods.



This 1882 Barnum & London Circus songster contains a biographical sketch of Billy Burke, as well as many of the songs he wrote and sang. Pfening Collection.

house, asked to see the proprietor and inquired if they 'wanted to hire anybody.'

The proprietor was favorably impressed with the appearance of the country youth. This was at a period when a young fellow came pretty near working for nothing and boarding himself 'to learn the business.' But this merchant had a local reputation for smallness and the wage that he named to the Ohioan caused William to exclaim with the boldness of a yokel: 'Mr., ain't you afraid that you will die of enlargement of the heart?'

Burke did not last long with the dry goods firm but found himself a member of Tumble's Varieties, corked up for an end man in song and dance. Naturally, he was a successful minstrel for nobody threw lumps of coal at him during the performance as was the usual custom when an act or actor was unappreciated.

Soon the life of a minstrel was cut short by the dark clouds of the war between the states. It is said Burke, then only sixteen, joined the Union colors. He apparently, fought with fortitude and valor during six major battles but then he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Arkansas Post and was given an honorable discharge. However, during his Army days he was extremely popular because of his comical songs and jokes about the daily life of a Civil War soldier. His happy-go-lucky disposition cost him his rank on several occasions but at the same time the rank was restored each time the officers desired some entertainment in camp. It is also reported that while in the hospital, recovering from his wounds, he was the chief source of morale building.



William E. Burke is pictured on a circus songster of the 1880s. Pfening Collection.

After the war was over and he recovered from his wounds, Burke again joined the ranks of minstrelsy in 1865. Again this venture did not last long and he joined the employ of James M. Nixon. Nixon's Circus made a brief southern tour and then set out, by ship, for Galveston, Texas. As one might expect a terrific storm arose and the

steamship was all but destroyed. Fortunately, Burke was picked up by the United States steamship, *South Carolina* and landed at New Orleans after several days battle with the fathomless deep. Burke seemed to enjoy the life of a clown in spite of the perilous adventure at sea.

Thayer and Noyes Circus (1861-1869) engaged Burke at New Orleans and soon the troupe started up the Red River on the steamer, *Ida May*, but again a severe wind storm wrecked the vessel but Burke escaped with only the loss of his expensive and handsome wardrobe. The show apparently was reorganized and Burke remained with them for two seasons. It is then reported that he spent a season with Mike Lipman's Circus (about 1866). This was followed by several seasons with the great Adam Forepaugh Show. He was indeed fortunate in serving under Forepaugh because Forepaugh could not realize a circus without the down-to-earth singing clown and although he was a shrewd bargainer when it came to wages and commissions from the sale of circus song books, he did not envy Burke his bit out of their sale to the public.

It has been said of Burke that he was a clown without malice, an ideal Mr. Merryman, who actually "looked the picture," especially so when playing vis-à-vis to his favorite ringmaster, Gus Clark.

Burke would mount an inverted elephant pedestal in front of the circus band and surround himself with the vocal talent from the dressing tents and circus backyard and these folks provided a perfect chorus. He would vocalize with a voice that filled the vast canvas tent to the delight of the immense audience, many of whom came to see and hear William E. Burke, and nobody else, year after year after year!

Burke was incomparable as a companion and his conversation was always engaging; time spent in his company in the circus backyard passed merrily and quickly for his many admirers and friends. He was always the life of the dressing tent. He was also respected by his professional "brothers."

It is said that Burke was one of the last of the singing clowns to retain the song book sale privilege and he made a large sum of money from their sale.

Burke also was a member of L. B. Lent's famous New York Circus while the latter played New York. His New York audiences were enthusiastic over his songs and ditties.

Burke was also a member of the John Robinson Circus but soon left to join the Trans-Oceanic Circus. While with this show, at Shreveport, Louisiana, there was one of the worst yellow fever outbreaks in history, but Burke again escaped with his usual good luck. From there he again joined L. B. Lent and still later the Great Eastern Circus.

Finally, in 1881 he became a member of Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth.

William E. Burke was certainly one of the greatest vocal jesters of the tented world. He died in England, October 5, 1906 after a colorful and fruitful career.

Peter Conklin

Peter (Pete) Conklin was born in New York on May 28, 1842. Like many another potential showman he left home at an early age and journeyed to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he promptly joined up with a party calling themselves Clarke's American Troupe of Ethiopian Minstrels. The troupe traveled throughout the state, finally disbanding at Columbus late in the season because of poor weather. On the way back to Cincinnati, Conklin joined some other entertainers and they organized themselves as Jim's Great American Valise Troupe, but he soon left and the group disbanded but not before first concluding that "nigger business was played out here." The year was 1855. If this date is correct, young Conklin was only thirteen years old.

Conklin is shown in a typical late 1800s costume in this photo taken around 1908. Burt Wilson Collection.



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THE ONLY LEGITIMATE & FIRST-CLASS CIRCUS NOW TRAVELING!

OLD DAN RICE'S EXCELSIOR CIRCUS!



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THREE EXHIBITIONS AT CLINTON, Thursday, Sept. 4—Grand Matinee in the Morning at 11 o'clock; 1:30 in the Afternoon, and at 8 o'clock at Night. Will also exhibit at Fulton, Sept. 3d.

The Dan Rice Circus featured Pete Conklin in this newspaper advertisement during the 1879 season. Circus World Museum Collection.

Then in 1856 Conklin joined Major Brown's Monster Colosseum & Great American Circus, in company with his brother, John. This show traveled all summer finally ending up in Cincinnati. He became a member of the E. F. Mabie's Southern Circus and Menagerie in 1857 and remained with the Mabies until around 1861. It was then that the ringmaster, W. H. Stout, introduced Pete to the role of singing clown. It was also at this time that he introduced pink lemonade to the circus world. Conklin sang comic songs for the Mabies for several seasons but finally left them to join Spalding & Roger's Floating Palace. Reportedly he was given a big reception by the circus public along the river towns of mid-America. At the outbreak of the Civil War he returned to Cincinnati and with his brothers formed Conklin Brother's Gymnasts and they performed nightly at Pike's Opera House. It was a successful engagement so they opened at Deagle's Theater at St. Louis where Pete made a great hit in the equestrian drama "Putnam". He played the part

of a mere sentinel. At this time he composed several Dutch comic songs to suit the war years and he is credited with singing "I Fight Siegel". Siegel was a St. Louisan and as a result the song was a big hit. With the capture of Memphis by the Yankees, Conklin went south with Campbell's Minstrels.

However, in 1863, Pete found himself performing and singing in England but he returned to the United States in 1864 and joined Dan Castello's Circus. He didn't remain with it long before he signed on with S. B. Howe's Circus in 1865 at Springfield, Ill. He was billed as "the great Western clown."

In February, 1865 Howe's Circus played New Orleans about which the *Times* (February 2nd) commented:

Pete Conklin, the clown, during his brief stay amongst us has won the golden opinions from all men, and proved himself one of the mainstays of the great show. His odd jokes and joking oddities have nightly been received with delight, until at last his appearance in the ring was attended with a universal grin from the audience, on the *qui vive* as they were rich things to come. His local hits were to the point, but the point was tipped with gold, kindly but sarcastic. He always commanded the attention of his audience; is one of the most promising clowns we have ever seen, and we sincerely hope to see him soon again. Howe's Circus will be remembered gratefully by the public of New Orleans, and they say 'let it return.'

On November 27, 1865 he was with Adam Forepaugh at Philadelphia. Then, on to New York and a brief engagement at Barnum's Museum where he performed with his brother in the "White Knight."

Conklin recalls that at one point during the Civil War the circus he was with:

Floated in a boat with all the lights out, passed Island #10, where if a light were seen we would have been blown out of the water by their cannon. We got to Vicksburg after the surrender and played to \$10,000 per day, all soldiers, blue coats and brass buttons, not a female in the crowd. General Morgan L. Smith gave me a tin cup and a drink of pine tap whiskey, out of a cask. I was in New Orleans when General Butler was there and we put up the first billboards ever used by a circus. In Caney Ville Swamp we put down boards, then dirt and built the sawdust ring on that.¹

It should be pointed out that Conklin's statement about the use of billboards in New Orleans remains unconfirmed at the present time.

It appears that in 1866, Conklin went

to Mexico when that country was engaged in difficulties with Archduke Maximilian, brother of Francis Joseph of Austria. This is an example of French (Napoleon III) interference in the affairs of Mexico. Great Britain, Spain and France all had financial claims against Mexico and when the Congress of Mexico voted to suspend payments for three years they decided to send expeditionary forces to Mexico. Napoleon, in order to please the Catholic party at home took up the cause of the Mexican president's "Clerical" enemies and for several years (1861-1867) the French Army kept Maximilian on the throne. When the Civil War ended in America we demanded the French leave Mexico under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine. The French left in 1867 and later Maximilian was shot by the Mexicans.

The show was Conklin Brother's Great American Circus and Menagerie with John Conklin, cannonball act, Pete Conklin, American clown, and the Conklin Bros.' acrobats. The show visited Vera Cruz and Mexico City and Conklin himself recalls that they performed before Maximilian, Marshall Bazaine and the French Army. Conklin recalls for us that:

... we had to carry our tents and center poles over the mountains on burro's backs.

While near Saltillo, we were on the road with one division of French army units in front of us and one behind us. The robber, Cortinas, swooped down and captured us and took us twenty miles off the road and robbed us and was going to shoot us for Frenchmen. Being Americans saved our lives. We got back to the road but were warned if we met the Austrians or the Frenchmen and told them what had happened they would be near enough to catch us and hang us. We met the Austrians and they charged down upon us and we were in another fix had I not been able to speak a little Pennsylvania Dutch and that changed matters completely.

We slept within their camp that night, perfectly safe. The commander told me, don't go to Matamoros, the French have been that way, eaten all the bullfrogs and we have eaten all the lizards and snakes left and there is no money in the country. Besides Cortina was hanging on their rear and might gobble us up. I told him we had just been gobbled and while I talked he began to give orders and within ten minutes 500 Austrians started off for Cortina's camp near San Luis Potosi and they cut nearly all of them to pieces and captured everything they had. I got to Brownsville on horseback, rode in

with four bits in my pocket, found an American named Bill, borrowed five hundred from him and gave a performance that night. We drew seven hundred dollars and after the show Col. Young's filibusters came in and sacked the town. They didn't have time to take the diamond rings from the ladies hands but chopped off the hands with sabers and put hands and rings in their pockets. Next day, the Alcaide gave us orders to get out in two hours or they would kill us. He said he believed we were in the gang and only gave the circus to draw the people out to be robbed. We started the show but before they got to the Rio Grande he had them captured. I escaped by bribing one of General Canale's aides to give me a pass and this he did signing the general's name to it. I presented this, got to the ferry and was nearly across when the forgery was discovered but I was safe then and on landing found General Getty at his headquarters and told him my troubles. He wrote a note to General Canales telling him to release every man of mine or he would send some regiments and set the town afire. I took this note and went across, was seized and hustled before General Canales, where I presented the note. He released everybody but demanded two hundred dollars which I paid him. General Getty treated me well.²



Pete Conklin and Bob Hunting were advertised as the two greatest clowns living on this 1880 Sells Brothers Circus lithograph. Pfening Collection.

Mr. Conklin also recalled in his retirement years how he was able to sell songsters. It appears that in 1865 he was with John O'Brien's Show for a short time and N. B. Shriner was a minstrel performer who had but one arm:

It struck me if I could get him to sell my song books in a soldier's uniform, I could give a great talk in my speech on the books. It was the close of the Civil War, that my spiel went big. Shriner liked the

idea until I told him to wear the uniform. He said 'I was never in the army. I lost my arm in a railroad wreck, and if I was ever questioned about what regiment I belonged to, I could not answer.' I posted him to say the 19th Pennsylvania Regiment. So on with the uniform and started in with the books. After I sang my song, I would make this announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen, I have a very fine song book, containing all the new and popular songs of the day, which I now offer for sale, not for myself, but for the benefit of a poor Union soldier, who battled for his country. He lost his arm, and this is the only way he has to make a living. He was a brave soldier, never turned his back on the enemy and I hope, ladies and gentlemen you won't turn your back on him." Books went like hot cakes.



Pete Conklin, "the oldest living clown" is shown in a photo that appeared in the March 22, 1913 Billboard. Circus World Museum.

We showed in Washington, D.C. to a very select audience, General Grant, General Sherman, General Sheridan, Roscoe Conklin and James G. Blaine. I made the spiel even stronger, saying he had lost the arm at Gettysburg.

Then the show turned South and Shiner used a Confederate uniform and that he belonged to the Washington Artillery from New Orleans. I said he was a brave soldier, never turned his back on the enemy, and that I hoped they wouldn't turn on him. It worked. At Lexington, Va.,

General R. E. Lee and his daughter visited the show and all bought books.

On the scheme I sold 100,000 books, the largest sale ever made on circus song books.³

Conklin also trouped as a singing clown with Burr Robbins in the 1830's and with Cooper & Bailey's International Allied Shows in 1876.

In 1891 Conklin formed the Conklin & Gilchrist Boat Show but as far as is known it existed for this one season; then he joined on with the W. B. Reynolds Circus and Menagerie in 1892. And just like some of the real old-timers of this day, "young Pete" performed in 1910 in Boston showing his many admirers that the "Old Roman" was still able to trot in fast company.

Pete Conklin flourished during the Golden Age of the American circus and in that age the clown was the soloist, not only in talking and singing, but also in other business around the "White Tops". It is said that when Conklin sang or said anything the entire tent roared with approval. Earl Chapin May, truly the first circus historian, claims that Pete's favorite song was *Whoa Emma*.

Peter Conklin, Jr. was the advance agent for Barnum & Bailey in 1897.

On the occasion of Conklin's 43rd Wedding Anniversary, at his home at 1776 West 8th street, Brooklyn and in the presence of his wife, son, Peters Jr., and daughter and son-in-law, Mr. & Mrs. Floyd H. Fox, Mr. Conklin related this yarn concerning his start in the sawdust ring:

One day while walking by the Western Museum on Sycamore St.

I saw a card in the window which said 'Boy Wanted.' I walked in and offered my services. The manager said he wanted a boy to beat the bass drum. He asked me if I ever had beat a bass drum. I said, 'No, but it wouldn't take me long to learn,' so he gave me a trial and I made good, and I've been following the bass drum ever since.⁴

Continuing in a happy vein, Mr. Conklin goes on to relate that:

W. F. Wallet was the clown with J. E. Mabies Circus and in those days Dan Rice of Spalding & Rogers decided to admit children free, so not to be outdone Wallet did the same and three of us, Sam Reinhardt, A. Richardson and I went to the circus and I, as spokesman said to Wallet, 'We see by the papers that "You are going to pass all boys who can tumble." He said, "What can you do?" I started in and turned a row of flip-flops and a somersault, which astonished him. He said, "You are all right. Can the others do as well?" And they did just the same. He passed us in, gave us a seat near the ring

just before the great tumbling act in the ring, he took us into the dressing room and made us take off our shoes and roll up our pants. He then took us back into the ring and introduced us to the audience and in his announcement he said he wanted to show the people of Cincinnati just what great talent they had. Well, we went into the act and got rounds of applause and made a great hit. He asked our names and said if we stuck to the business we would make our mark. I took his advice and took my brother in with me and we practiced a brother act.

Our first engagement was with Mabies Circus, where I succeeded Tony Pastor.

Then in 1865 in Philadelphia while with the Forepaugh Show I was in the same ring with Rice and Wallet. Wallet had not seen me since as a boy and tumbling in Cincinnati and he was surprised and said, 'You have made your mark.' I did go into the ring after these two stars and did O.K.

I played for Charlie Fish's act and to be noticed I had to do something. I went into the ring with a hurrah and a round of flip-flops and a high back somersault which so differed from the other jesters, that I caught on big. Mr. Fish was a first-class trick rider, but very uncertain. On this night he wanted to do something extra, to turn a somersault on one foot over an object, a very difficult feat. He tried and failed and I made excuses, saying the horse was running bad, and the ring was bad, etc., until the audience began to get tired. But Mr. Fish was determined to do that feat. So I helped him out. I said to the ringmaster, Tom Kirk: I know just where the fault lies. It isn't the horse's fault. It isn't the rider's fault, nor the ring.' So the ringmaster said: 'If you know where the fault lies, please tell us.' I led him in front of the orchestra and pointed to the man with the big horn, and said: 'Every time he blows in that he blows Mr. Fish off the horse.' Then the ringmaster said to the man with the big horn: 'Please don't blow into that horn until Mr. Fish has accomplished this great feat.' Then Fish astonished everyone by doing the trick, while the audience applauded. This little bit of mine made me a great favorite in Philadelphia.⁵

Finally, Conklin relates the following story about Dan Rice. It seems that when:

We were in many temperance towns and Dan used to take a night cap before he retired. One town no liquor was to be found and Rice

said to me to find some. I did.

It seems that the town's banker always had a supply at home but the problem was to get to him. I suggested Rice serenade the banker after the show. Charlie Devere, ballad singer, sang, *Shall Old Acquaintances Be Forgot*, beneath the banker's window. The window opened, he came down and let us in and Dan got his drink. Devere continued to sing such songs as *Under the Willow* and *She is Sleeping*. Dan sang, after a hearty drink, *Mr. Jolly Jack Rover* and I sang *Little Brown Jug*.⁶

Pete Conklin, unquestionably was one of the greatest singing clowns that the world of sawdust and spangles has ever produced. As indicated previously, he was acclaimed by the press of this country and he had many friends in his long and interesting circus career. Conklin, unlike many of his contemporaries, freely related many of the episodes of his life, but, like so many, he was uneducated and consequently he was not always accurate about dates, places, circuses and grammar. No attempt has been made to edit any of the related stories. Naturally, his advanced age accounts for some inconsistencies in story telling.

John Davenport

The late Colonel Sturtevant wrote a most fascinating biography of the Davenport Riding Family and in it he relates much about John Davenport as a singing clown. It will be this portion of his career that will be the center of our attention.

Sturtevant relates that:

He kept his act up-to-date and entertaining by getting new material constantly. To play all through the winter season in one place he had to have much new material and like radio people today, he had men like Silas Steel of Baltimore and J. Denard of New Orleans, writers who furnished him material for years. On summer tours, a clown used the songs and gags a whole season, but those that could be put in as local gags at each stand, were immensely popular.

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1. *Billboard*, April 29, 1911, p. 24
2. *Ibid.*, March 22, 1913, p. 21, 28
3. *Ibid.*, March 28, 1914, p. 24
4. *Ibid.*, May 1914
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. I wish to take this opportunity to express sincere thanks to Robert (Bob) Parkinson of the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin for allowing access to the various collections under his supervision so that I could gather important data for this and other articles. My stay at the Museum during August, 1967 proved very profitable because of the helpful staff there.



John Davenport is shown here in a photo that was probably taken on the Burr Robbins Circus. Davenport is on the left with John, Jr. (Orrin's brother) on horse and clown Jules Turnour on right. Burt Wilson Collection.

Davenport used to mount the leaping board and announce that agents would pass among the audience with song books containing the words to the songs of the day, jokes etc., which could be purchased for a small sum. Davenport often netted as much as fifty dollars a week. The old one-ring circus revolved around the Ringmaster, Principal Equestrian, and the clown. Davenport was an expert in all three lines.¹

John Davenport as a young man traveled with Spalding Rogers Circus between the years 1852 and 1856 as a singing and talking clown. In 1860 he toured England with Howes and Cushing's Circus and in 1863 he was with the John Robinson Circus. The year 1865 found him with Frank J. Howe's Champion Circus. D. E. Dunham Shows engaged Davenport in 1875 as a singing and talking clown. By 1884 he was with Burr Robbins Circus "as a clown, but now more time was spent in training his sons, John, Jr., and Albert (Stick) for equestrianism." It was soon after this that he devoted all of his time and talents to teaching his sons to ride and less and less to clowning. One must remember that the era of the singing and talking clown was fast coming to a close.

The Davenport Riding Family has had a long and distinguished career in the circus world including tours with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. His daughter, May, trouped with Ringlings for almost twenty years and she was followed by daughter, Louise and another son, Orrin. Orrin retired from riding in the 1930's and then he entered the area of producing his own

circuses. He has been very successful in this area. John, Sr. started to train the latter three children to ride back in 1895.

John Lowlow

John Lowlow's parents came to the shores of America in 1818 and were married soon afterwards in New York City. John, according to one report was born on August 9, 1841 at Savannah, Georgia,¹ and a second source claims the joyous event occurred in 1834 at Atlanta. He died on October 18, 1910 at his home, 520 East 4th Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, after a months illness which was caused by an abscess under the knee cap. The symptoms baffled physicians at the time.

Lowlow's father was a captain of a coastal schooner and he was lost at sea in 1850, so that at a tender age, John, was left an orphan, as his mother had died sometime earlier.² Friends arranged for schooling for the young man who early demonstrated his independent nature which he also displayed as an adult.³ Like many other young men of his day, Lowlow was thrilled by the circus. Lowlow apprenticed himself at an early age as a trapeze performer, and from this role he drifted into clowning. He remained in the circus business for over fifty years.

Luckily, he made the acquaintance of the famous singing clown, Sam Long. Long put him to work first selling candy as the former operated the refreshment stand with the circus. Unfortunately, the name of the circus is not known. Then in his own words, Lowlow states that:

It was a chance that gave me the position of clown as the regular clown (Sam Long) was sick and he asked me to fill his place and I performed the part so well that from that time on I did clown work,

1. *The White Tops*, January-February 1944

How each bill and poster would be examined and when the day came, bright and early before the cock crowed how every member of the household would be awake and dressed ready to see the elephants

Page 21

Rice are linked with the origin of pink lemonade, and so it is with John Lowlow. Lowlow, it is said played a leading role in getting West Virginians to select Charleston as their new state capitol in 1877. This story has been written up by several individuals and basically they all relate the same sequence of events.

In *West Virginia, A Guide to the Mountain State* one reads that the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway was completed to the Ohio River in 1873, but Charleston was located across the unbridged Kanawha River, which, according to the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, had the "poorest excuse of a ferry that was ever allowed to cross a stream. The capital city's facilities for modern travel are restricted by a 'John boat' controlled by a lazy oarsboy impervious to the appeals and signals of beckoning passengers."⁷

The northern city's agitation against Charleston continued and became bitter in 1875, when the legislature ordered the Capitol moved to Wheeling. The legislature adopted a resolution calling upon the people to make the choice at a special election on August 7, 1877, providing that the decision would become effective in 1885. Charleston, Martinsburg, and Clarksburg made bids for the new capitol. Romeo H. Freer and John E. Kenna (the latter, who later served two terms in the United States Senate and whose statue stands in the Hall of Fame in Washington), were not particularly successful during the early campaign — neither had been able to attract many listeners for their speeches. But then a dramatic event occurred:

Only ten days remained before the election, and Kenna and Freer arrived in Huntington, fatigued and discouraged, but determined to make one last effort. They were attracted by the shrill whistling of a steam calliope — a circus parade was approaching. 'And,' said Kenna, 'this is to be our competition for today.' Their last hope had faded and they returned to the hotel bar, where a stranger invited them to have a drink. In the conversation that followed, Kenna and Freer complained of their dilemma and lamented their failure to attract audiences. Their host said he was connected with the circus and added, "There ought to be some way to help you fellows. Come to the entrance of the show today and ask for John Lowlow."

So Lowlow, the noted clown, took up his task of helping Charleston in its fight for the Capitol. He arranged for the two to travel with the circus and they were allowed five minutes during each performance to speak for their cause. For a week they traveled the territory

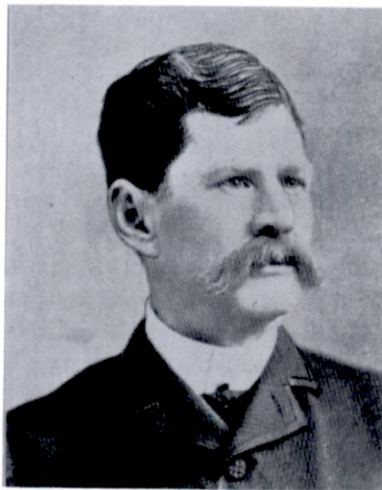
they had failed to arouse, speaking to as many as 5,000 circus fans at one time. . .⁸

In the election Charleston was selected by a vote greater than the total vote cast for its rivals.

Years later, when Kenna had attained high standing among his associates in Washington and a trusted adviser to President Grover Cleveland, the John Robinson Circus showed the National Capitol.

Recalling old days, Kenna organized a senatorial party and all went as his guests to the circus. During the evenings performance, a white-faced clown stood on a barrelhead and waved for silence. 'Is there in the audience a man by the name of Kenna — Senator John E. Kenna of West Virginia? He used to travel with this circus.' That night, John Lowlow was the guest of a party given by Senator Kenna and the clown's part in locating West Virginia's Capitol was made known to the group.⁹

The capital was moved from Wheeling to Charleston in 1885.



Kyle McCormick, former director of the West Virginia Department of History and Archives writes that:

Finally, in 1877, the Legislature decided to abolish the mobile capitol once and for all. In an election on August 7, the citizens of West Virginia selected Charleston as their permanent capitol from a slate of . . . The celebrated John Robinson Circus played a part in the election. Charleston supporters followed the circus from town to town and campaigned for a Charleston site. They won easily, and state officials and archives took their last ride down the Ohio and up the Kanawha to Charleston.¹⁰

The present (1967) State Historian and Archivist, James L. Hupp states that:

We regret that we do not have newspapers for the period of time to verify the story of the clown and the West Virginia State Capitol. We feel sure the story is true but without proof, we cannot claim that it is.¹¹

However, in his letter, Dr. Hupp included an article from the *Ellenville, N.Y. newspaper* for 1885. The story of John Lowlow in this paper and the part he played is essentially the same as others reported herein. One will note that 1885 is just eight years after the election of 1877. One seems drawn to the conclusion that, Lowlow did play a role in the selection of Charleston as the new state capitol of West Virginia.

Mr. George W. Summers writing in 1935¹² and Mr. William C. Blizzard,¹³ writing in 1960 both relate about the same story.

But getting back to 1885, in 1883, at Ellenville, New York, a newspaper called the "Banner of Liberty" was published as "An Independent National Newspaper, Devoted to the Inculcation of Pure Jeffersonian Principles." In this paper on Friday, May 8, 1885 a front page story, dated May 1st, Wheeling, West Virginia, relates the events of 1877 mentioned previously:

This city today ceased to be the capital of West Virginia. On and after May 2 the seat of government for the Mountain State will be at Charleston on the Kanawha River, in the southern end of the state. The capital was located here when West Virginia became a state, but at the close of the war was removed to Charleston. In 1875 the Legislature passed an act establishing Wheeling as the seat of government until otherwise directed by law. The citizens donated the state a building to be used as a capitol so long as the seat of government remained there. In 1877 the Legislature ordered an election upon the re-location of the capital permanently. Charleston, Clarksburg, and Martinsburg were the competing points and Charleston won. At 10 o'clock tomorrow—May 2, 1885—the State Archives, government property, and capitol furniture will leave Wheeling on the steamers Belle Prince and Chesapeake. Governor E. W. Wilson and the state officers will accompany them on the Chesapeake. The State House at Charleston will not be completed for several years, but a few of the executive offices will be occupied at once."

A CLOWN WAS largely responsible for our state capital being Charleston. Each of the competing cities sent representatives out over

the state to drum up votes. To the hustlings Charleston sent John E. Kenna and Romeo H. Freer. These men were good speakers but they were particularly unsuccessful in getting the people to hear them..."

The point is that the Ellenville newspaper quoted in 1885 story from the Wheeling, W. Va. paper. This was just eight years after the Kenna-Freer episode is supposed to have taken place. The Wheeling paper must have gotten the clown story of 1877 from some source in the State of West Virginia. However, a thorough search of the Wheeling *Intelligencer*, from July 21 to August 16, 1877 and the Richmond (Virginia) *Dispatch* (July 16 to August 6, 1877) and the Clarksburg and Martinsburg newspapers fail to reveal a single reference to substantiate the role of John Lowlow and the John Robinson Circus in the selection of Charleston as the site of the new capitol. The Wheeling and Richmond papers were searched because of the great editorial respect they enjoyed throughout the southeastern portion of the United States, then, as well as today. It was felt that some editorial comment would have been made concerning the fact that a circus and a clown were involved in politics. Of course, they could have purposely avoided mention of the episode, simply because they were unfriendly to circuses. It is known today that both West Virginia and Virginia have shown little enthusiasm about the circus in general.

It is discouraging enough that there is no documentary evidence to prove that John Lowlow assisted in the selection of the new capitol in 1877. But even more frustrating is the fact that there is no evidence that the John Robinson Circus actually toured in West Virginia in 1877.

However, I strongly feel that the John Lowlow story is true and it is hoped that additional facts will come to light in the very near future to further support my contention.

If the story is true, it again demonstrates the active role a circus and a clown took in the lives of Americans in 1877.

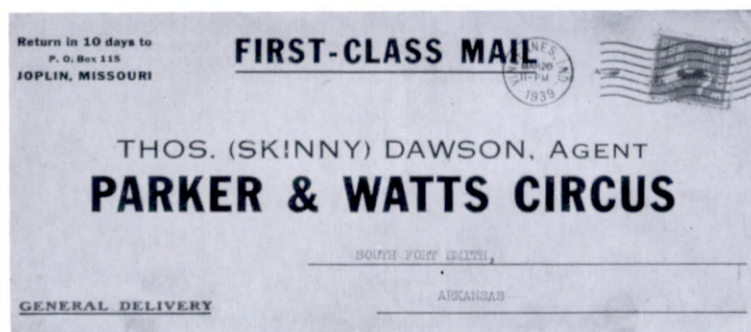
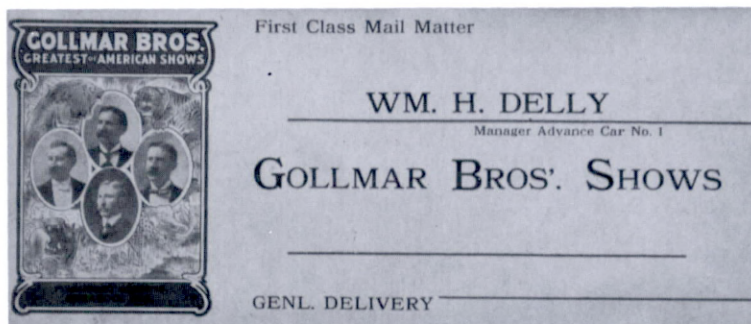
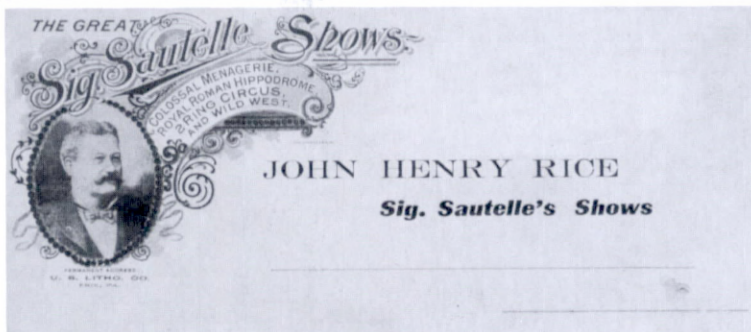
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3. *Ibid.*
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9. *Ibid.*, 184.
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11. Courtesy of the Department of Archives and History, State of West Virginia. Dr. James

L. Hupp, State Historian and Archivist, June 21, 1967.

12. *The Charleston Journal*, 1935, pp. 5-6
13. Charleston (West Va.) *Daily Mail* and *Charleston Gazette*, 1960.
14. Courtesy of the Department of Archives and History, State of West Virginia.
15. I wish also to express sincere appreciation to former CFA president, John Arter of Charleston, West Virginia, for all of his help and deep interest during the research of this paper. Likewise, to Tom Parkinson, for suggesting I investigate the Lowlow story and for his early assistance in the study.

Bill Woodcock's Circus Envelopes



SEND CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

For next issue

Those wishing to take advertisements extending Christmas Greetings should send their copy to the Editor by Nov. 5th. Special Christmas rates: Full page \$30, 1/2 page \$15, 1/4 page \$8.00.

Steam Calliopes in the Billboard

Part One

By Fred Dahlinger

My original purpose in reading the Billboard files was to confirm certain theories I had formulated regarding several of the lesser known steam calliopes. However, enough new information on other steam calliopes already documented has turned up to warrant this article.

THE FOREPAUGH-CASTLE CALLIOPE

This calliope probably has more written about it than any other, due to the fact it saw service on at least eleven shows, enumerated in an original article on this calliope, appearing in the Nov.-Dec. 1965 Bandwagon, by Fred D. "Rick" Pfening III, which was further supplemented by short articles in the March-April 1967, March-April 1968 and May-June 1969 Bandwagons. All of these articles gave information on the later years of the calliope, however, none of them touched upon its early history. Probably the only information available about it, before Castle bought it, appears in the April 13, 1901 Billboard on page 7. It is reproduced here in its entirety. The author's comments are in brackets. "Bud Horn, The Calliope King, will play the same instrument this year [1901, Campbell Bros.] that he presided on the packet Robert Burns in 1879. Adam Forepaugh then bought it from the steamboat people at Louisville in 1885 and in 1887 Bud played it again for Forepaugh. In 1895 he again encountered the instrument while in the employ of Leon W. Washburn. [For the interim 1897-1899, I would guess the calliope was used by Washburn on his Stetson U.T.C. show.] The original whistles were all stolen from the instrument in the fall of 1896 at Cincinnati by some miscreant and a new set was made. The instrument, though twenty-two years old is as good as ever." The only part of this statement which seems open to fire, besides its placement on Campbell in 1901, is the stating that the instrument received a new set of whistles. By examining available photos of the calliope taken before and after the year 1896, there appears to be a slight difference in the whistles, noticeable especially in the shape of the top of the whistle.

The reason I inserted the doubtful note about its being on Campbell in 1901, although there is no mistaking the calliope described was the Forepaugh-Castle calliope, is based on an

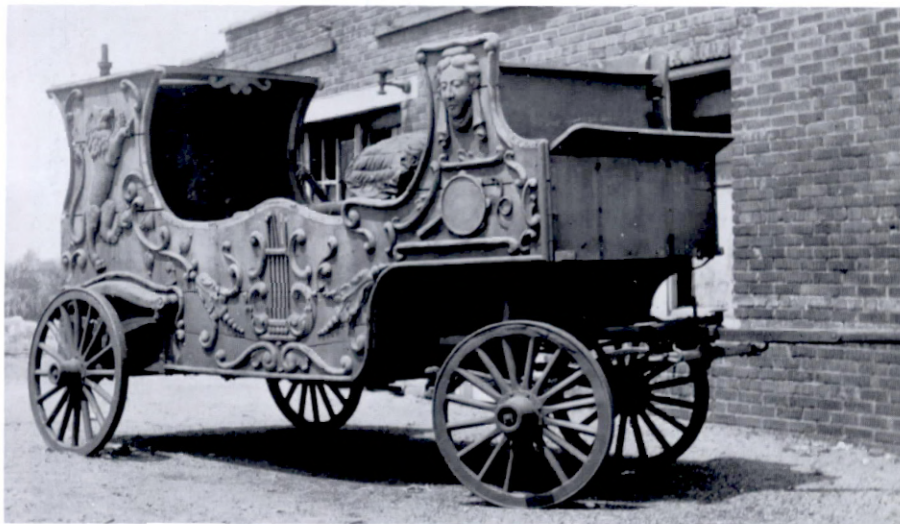
item appearing in the December 15, 1900 Billboard on page 19. It states, "Our latest purchase is as fine a calliope as money can buy," quoted from one of the Campbell brothers apparently. If it is true, either Fred Castle sold his calliope or the Forepaugh calliope was not on the show in 1901, as Fred only rented his calliope to shows. However, the Billboard reference could refer to a calliope that was ordered by Campbell Bros. from Sullivan and Eagle of Peru, Indiana. Two Billboard references confirm the existence of this "new" calliope. The first, in the April 5, 1902 issue on page 6 stated, "A sixteen foot calliope is in the course of construction for Campbell Bros.," [by Sullivan and Eagle], and the second, which confirms it would be on the show that year appears on page 5 of the April 12 issue and stated Bud Horn would be manipulating the keys on one of the finest calliopes ever built for a circus. No identification of this calliope is known to me, except that possibly it is pictured in an unidentified calliope picture that has been floating around for a while. The wagon, pictured in photo no. 1, appears to be of Sullivan and Eagle manufacture, however, it could be one of several other obscure calliopes built by the firm. Whatever calliope was on the show from 1902 to 1906, it is gone by 1907, when it was replaced by the familiar Wallace Dragon calliope.

Getting back to our original subject,

Photo No. 1 Unidentified calliope at Hammond, Indiana. Photo taken around 1935. Author's Collection.

there are several other facts recently discovered which add to its "written" history. The first of these appears in the Sept. 6, 1902 Billboard on page 5 and relates that Ernest [better known as E. Deacon] Albright had finished a three-month engagement as calliope player with the Buckskin Bill's Wild West. It also stated that Albright would play the calliope for Fred R. Castle next season. From this it would appear Castle hired the player and not the show, as stated by Mr. Frank Goldquist in the March-April 1967 Bandwagon. The young calliapist referred to in the same article would be identified as E. Deacon Albright, whose playing must have improved with his age.

The Forepaugh calliope might not have been on the Hulburd Wild West Show at all in 1905. I believe Pfening placed it there by a statement in the April 29, 1905 Billboard that Fred R. Castle would be assistant manager of the show and Pfening's own supposition, which is correct, that Fred R. Castle always traveled with his calliope. However, the June 10 Billboard, on page 19 states Castle had accepted the position of calliope player at White City, Chicago for the season. White City was an amusement park, one of several so-named that were scattered about the country. Chicago was where Hulburd was putting his show together, which would make conditions right for his engagement. Possibly Castle didn't go with his calliope and only he was at White City, as I could find no further mention of any calliope in the amusement park sections of the Billboard for



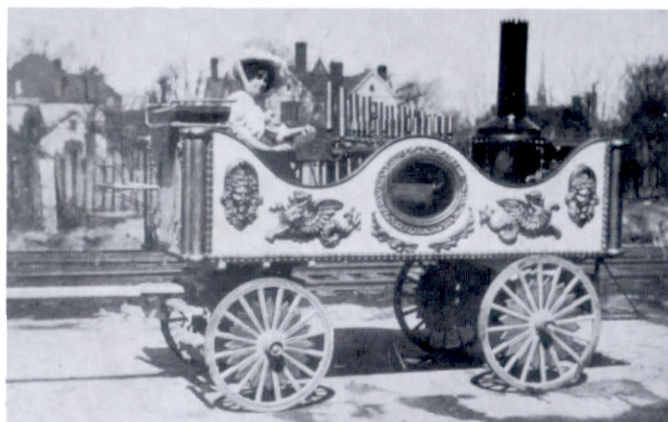


Photo No. 2 This photo of an unidentified calliope was taken around 1900. This is not an early Sparks calliope as is sometimes suggested. Author's Collection.

several years. It can be stated that the Forepaugh calliope or Fred R. Castle or both were with the Cosmopolitan Carnival as early as 1905, as the November 17, 1906 Billboard states that Fred R. Castle had been connected with the Cosmopolitan for nearly two years.

SULLIVAN AND EAGLE CALLIOPE

A little more than one half dozen lesser to well-known calliopes built by this firm since 1901 can be accounted for. Their calliope building probably began after the firm placed an add in the November 23 Billboard advertising, "Calliopes in full carved and gilded or plain with ornamental painting." One for sure and maybe two more might be added to our present list: one for the Buckskin Bill Wild West Show, one for Norris and Rowe, and the previously mentioned Campbell Bros. Calliope. The basis for the first of these on the Buckskin Bill Show is mentioned in the February 21, 1903 Billboard on page 10. It states, "Sullivan and Eagle of Peru are building a \$1,500 calliope for the show." It is possible Sullivan and Eagle did build such a calliope, however, no calliope was with the show when it became the Younger-James Wild West, only by changing the name. The author considers this a reference incorrectly labeled and should be a new calliope for the Pawnee Bill Show. No reference to a calliope earlier than 1903 on the Pawnee Bill show, appears in the Billboard. The first reference to one on the show appeared in the May 23, 1903, Billboard, when the show was advertising for a calliopist. Possibly it could have been the Buckskin show ordered the calliope and Sullivan and Eagle was actually building it, but the show didn't last long enough to receive it and the Pawnee Bill show picked it up.

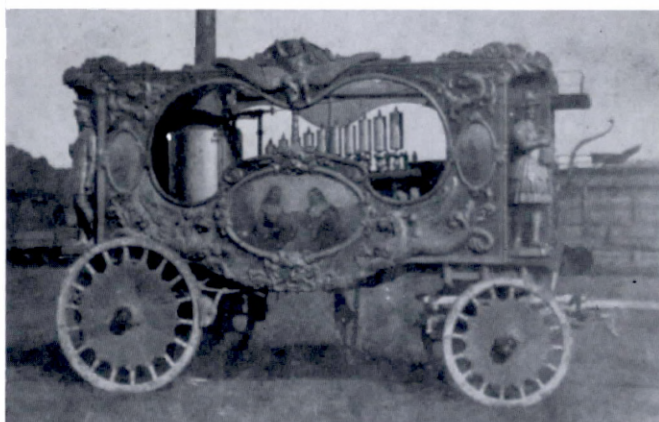


Photo No. 4 The Batcheller and Doris calliope is shown in 1885. Notice how new the instrument appears. Circus World Museum Collection.

It might be mentioned here that several calliope historians are of the opinion that the calliope that was originally on the Luella-Forepaugh-Fish Wild West Show was never actually on the show and was only ordered by it from Sullivan and Eagle. Unless there is concrete evidence to support this, the June 27, 1903 Billboard refutes this. It states "Bud Horn, The Calliope King, [calliope player on Forepaugh-Fish] is pleasing men, women and children." This seems to imply he was pleasing them with his calliope playing.

There is only one reference to a Sullivan and Eagle calliope being made for The Norris and Rowe show, appearing in the May 10, 1902 Billboard on page 5. It stated, "Sullivan and Eagle are building a calliope for Norris and Rowe." It is doubtful if this is the calliope that was pictured in the July-August 1962 Bandwagon on page 16.

That calliope, or at least the instrument is what is probably referred to in the October 1, 1904 Billboard. It stated, "Norris and Rowe recently purchased a calliope and two dens and added another flat car." Because the calliope is mentioned on an equal level with the two dens, it might be implicated that at least the calliope wagon was changed. I cannot account for why Norris and Rowe would get this new calliope except that possibly the instrument was becoming older. Astute readers will notice the distinct similarities between the boilers and instruments of the 1906 Norris and Rowe calliope, the Forepaugh-Castle calliope and the Sells Bros. calliope, probably meaning the

COMING SOON

Pictorial Encyclopedia Of Circus Parade Wagons

The first complete listing of various types of circus parade wagons ever to be published will begin soon in Bandwagon. In the form of a catalog listing with a photograph, or drawing, this series will provide a master list of a given style wagon.

The first in the planned series will be on the steam calliope, and it is hoped that this will be ready for the big Christmas Special issue of Bandwagon. The shell band chariots will be the second in the series, with other wagon and cage styles to follow.

With this series of pictorial catalogs of wagons the Bandwagon will provide a service long needed by circus historians. Additional copies of these issues will be printed so they will be available to those historians who wish to buy extra copies to be cut up and filed.

THE ANDREW DOWNIE
CALLIOPE

It is more logical that the calliope would go to Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson Circus. There are references in the 1906 Billboards to a calliope on that show. Earlier Buchanan, who operated Ingersoll Park in Des Moines, Iowa, had placed an ad in the Billboard for any used circus equipment, so it

SIG SAUTELLE AND SIPE CALLIOPEs

Photo No. 3 This illustration from a 1903 Barnum & Bailey litho shows the second Barnum & Bailey calliope in the right middle, and the Batcheller and Doris calliope in upper left. Bob Good Collection.

BATCHELLER AND DORIS
CALLIOPE

Getting back to our subject, shown in a c.1885 photo on Batcheller and Doris, it was probably built sometime shortly after 1880, for that show. It is of the same style as the Main, Lemen and Young Buffalo calliopes. Notice the remote similarity of its dragons to those in the calliope in photo no. 2. Its transfer to Barnum and Bailey is related in footnote 4, page 26, of Richard Conover's most recent publication, **The Fielding Bandchariots**. It was probably purchased to replace the earlier calliope, which could have been destroyed in an 1887 Bridgeport fire. By 1905, the instrument had evidently worn out and a new one was ordered by the show from the Geo. Kratz Calliope Co., Evansville, Indiana. The order, which appears in the November 19, 1904 Billboard related the fact that Kratz was building a very large calliope for the show, 38 whistles to be exact. To get an idea of the cost, of a new calliope, a Kratz letter on file at the Circus World Museum states a 37 whistle calliope, unmounted, cost \$600 in 1903. Sometime between January 21, 1905 and February 20, 1905 the calliope, or at least the wagon, was destroyed in



Crowning Triumph of Grand Colossal Pageant and Combined Free Moving Street Fair and Exposition

29 FANCY DESIGNED AND SEVERELY CARVED PORK-WHEELLED TERMPHAL CARLS. Mouthful and Potomacque Grandeur. Charming girls and Roman race reveals. One of the wild beauties. Many kinds of Elephantia. Gelma trained to drive like horses.

AMERICA. Blue and gold. Central figure: "America" seated on a buffalo. Group of around her are Columbia, Canada, an Actor and a Pioneer. The living figures are an Indian, Canadian, a Gaucho and a Mexican. Drivers, a Cowboy and brought with an outrider representing United States soldiers in khaki.

FAIRY TALES. Red and gold. Figures representing childhood's tales in statuary and tableaux vivants, among which are "Puss in Boots," "Humpty Dumpty," "Jack the Giant Killer," "Fairy Queen," "Sleeping Beauty," "Prince Charming," "Aladdin," "All the King's Horses."

The six outdoor areasters in beds and the driver a clown.

GOLDEN AGE OF CHIVALRY. Green, red and gold. This float typifies an ancient golden double dragon with protruding tongues and blazing nostrils. Upon the back of the dragon is a captive maiden. Upon either side is a Knight Templar. The six outriders are medieval knights, with a servant as driver.

OUR COUNTRY, Blue and gold. The sides contain the shields of all the States of the Union. The driver is Uncle Sam. The body of the float represents the Altar of Liberty. The float is decorated with flags, stars and bunting. Upon a raised platform is a figure of Liberty.

A TEAM OF 40 BEAUTIFULLY MATCHED BAY HORSES
hitched abreast in quarters, and driven by one man.



a railroad wreck at Buffalo, N. Y. The January 21 issue of the Billboard stated Kratz had shipped the calliope and the March 11, 1905 issue stated the calliope arrived at Bridgeport on February 20, "a total wreck."

Now for some time, probably since 1934, when Fletcher Smith's calliope article appeared in the August 25 Billboard, there has existed a shaky theory that the above calliope, at least the instrument, was on the Frank A. Robbins show. There are several facts which incline the author to believe it was actually there. First, Fletcher Smith said he played the Barnum and Bailey calliope on the Frank Robbins show in 1905 and that it was the first calliope he played, which is of no consequence to our story here. Now, the June 30, 1906 Billboard stated Fletcher Smith was again playing the calliope with the Frank Robbins show this year, 1906, implying he was also on the same show in 1905, as calliapist, lending more truth to his story. Robbins did acquire some other property out of Bridgeport, including the Sells Brothers Eagle Tableau and the old Barnum & Bailey Tableau #49, but these came after the Fletcher quoted 1905 date; more likely after the Ringlings removed Forepaugh Sells from the road in 1907. At least neither of these items show in the Robbins parade mount photograph illustrated in the full page pictorial spread that appears on page 26 of the September 1, 1906 Billboard. Further indication that the first Frank Robbins calliope wasn't very good is that it was

Photo No. 5 This is a new uncirculated photo of the first Yankee Robinson Calliope. Circus World Museum Collection.

with the show for only one year, if that long. Fletcher Smith, according to the same June 30 Billboard, would be playing a new four octave, [4 octaves x 8 notes per octave = 32 whistles or notes], calliope built for the show by a Cincinnati firm. Undoubtedly, Nichol,

who was on the southeast corner of Pearl and Ludlow Streets in Cincinnati, built the calliope. With the evidence presented above, it would appear that the fourth Barnum and Bailely calliope instrument ended its day with Frank Robbins. What happened after it appeared on this show is unknown to the author.

Thus ends the first part of Billboard calliopes. It covers roughly a period in print from 1894 to 1906. One reading the article might get the impression I am only trying to disprove the work of "Rick" Pfening. Such is not the case. Fred Pfening has contributed much to the calliope file of the author and has answered many calliope questions for him, for which he is grateful. I would like to thank Dick Conover and Tom Parkinson for some interesting points related to me by them in one of our several discussions. The author would appreciate hearing from anyone having photos of any of the calliopes discussed or any further information.

Charlie Puck's Snapshots



This interesting photo of the Ringling-Barnum Circus cookhouse was taken in Los Angeles, California, on September 13, 1922.

Contortion-Acrobatic Handbalancing-Circus

PHOTOGRAPHS

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1969 CIRCUS PHOTOGRAPHS 1969

Baraboo and Milwaukee, Wis.

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This photo shows the general lot layout of the Tom Mix Circus, during its first season of 1935. The equipment had been on the Sam B. Dill Circus in 1934, that had featured Mix. Pfening Collection.